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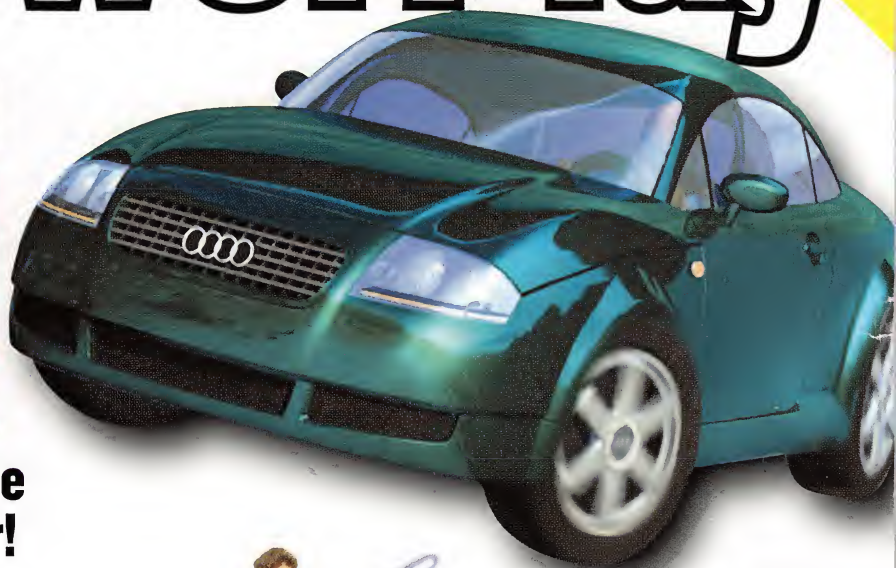
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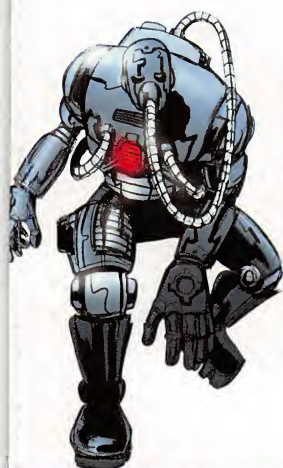
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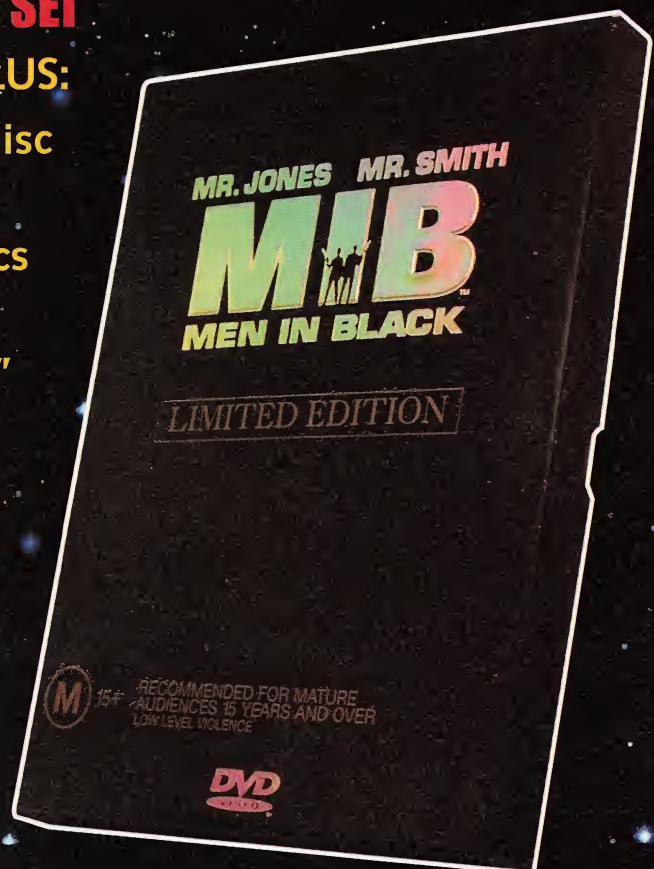
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We burnt up the streets of San Francisco to bring you this world first review!



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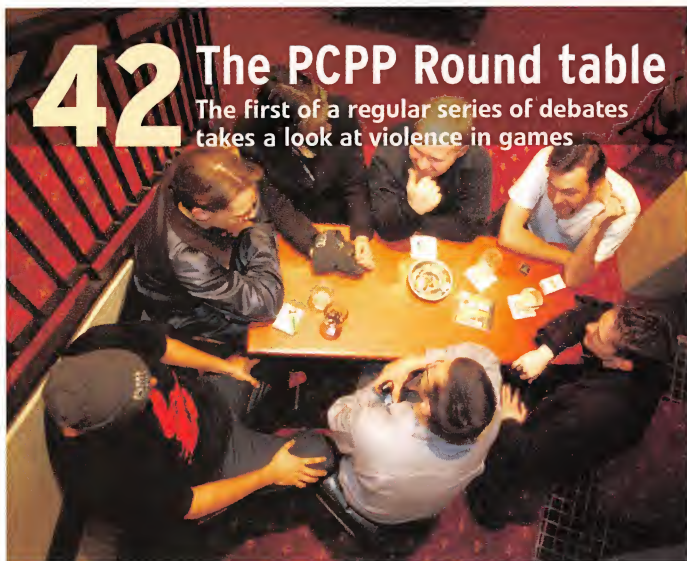
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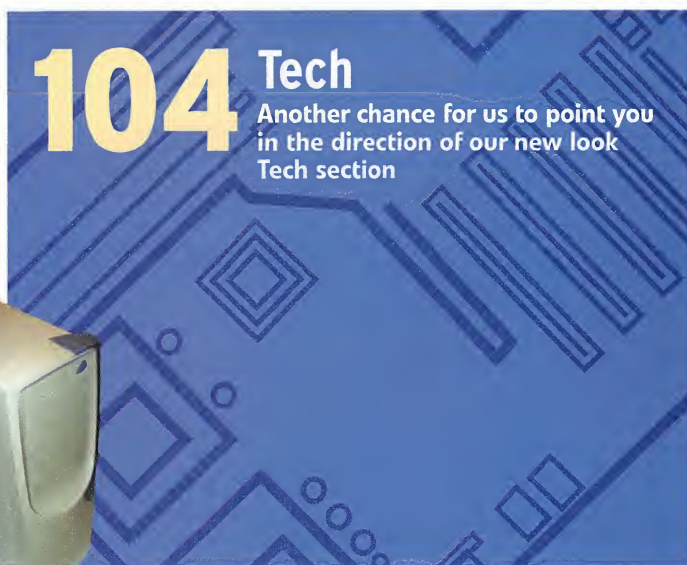
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We put Adelaide-based Ratbag Games under interrogation



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Another chance for us to point you in the direction of our new look Tech section



THE GREAT DEBATE



DAVID WILDGOOSE

There must be a reason why I stick to virtual roads

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Thief II

Hello and welcome to the November issue of PC PowerPlay. Please step up to the retinal scanner so we can verify your security clearance before letting you proceed to the rest of the magazine. One can't be too cautious these days. Remember - trust no one.

The issue of violence in computer and videogames is one media and conversation topic that simply refuses to die - no matter how many proximity mines we attach to its back. Much of what passes for analysis of the delicate subject is misguidedly based around a litany of wrong-headed assumptions: that games are too violent, that games are enjoyed only for their violence, that depictions of violence are inherently bad, that the interactive nature of games makes them "worse" than film or tv, and of course - this one is my particular favourite - that only children play games.

With all this in mind, PC PowerPlay's wisest members (or at least those who live in Sydney) gathered together for the first PCPP Roundtable Debate. The goal of which being to clear up the confusion, inform the ignorant, and to simply set

the record straight. Hopefully, we managed to achieve this despite us quickly realising that holding the debate in the Strawberry Hills Hotel was perhaps not the greatest idea. John did a fine job of ensuring we sounded thoughtful and articulate amid the slurred words, drunken pedantry and arguments over whose round was next. Above all, though, I'd like to think we have encouraged you guys to respond with your equally considered thoughts.

One of the last pieces of the new and improved PCPP jigsaw has been carefully slotted into place at the back of this issue. Turn to p104 to discover our greatly expanded Tech section, brimming with the latest news, product reviews and in-depth examination of PC hardware. Hugh was so pleased with how it turned out, he decided to include a new photo of himself on the opening page. Restrain yourself, girls.

I played Midtown Madness 2 this month. I believe I can safely say that the experience has only served to reinforce my decision not to own a car. Until next time.

david@next.com.au

THE PC POWERPLAY CREW

Midtown Madness 2 caused us to reassess the kind of drivers we are...



BRETT ROBINSON

The type who's constantly on the lookout for 5-0

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Deus Ex



HUGH NORTON-SMITH

They don't call me Speed Racer for nothing

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Snake II



MARCH STEPNIK

I'm a "wheel between the knees" kind of guy

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Baldur's Gate II



HARRY MARAGOS

The type that would make Mad Max proud

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Carmageddon 2K

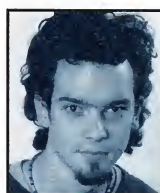


CHANTAL BAIRLE

I haven't driven in nine years (lucky for other drivers)

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Connect 4



ASHLEY MILLOTT

I don't drive... I cruise

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Streetfighter II



MIKE WILCOX

I'm like a cranky London cabbie

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Deus Ex



MJ DES MCNICHOLAS

A very bad one

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Ground Control



CHRISTIAN READ

The UN passed legislation against my learning to drive

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Heavy Metal FAKK2



EDWARD FOX

On four wheels - yuk! On two wheels - oh yeah!

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Sydney 2000



AGATA BUDINSKA

I am a very friendly driver

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Icwind Dale



JOHN DEWHURST

Not the best - that's why I catch the train!

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Gabriel Knight III

PC PowerPlay

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8 new screaming machines are hitting the streets of San Francisco and London. Not to mention the buildings, fountains and shopping malls. The only rule in this race is: There aren't any rules.



MIDTOWN MADNESS²

www.microsoft.com/games/midtown2

Microsoft



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FIRST LOOK!

Call To Power II

WE ANSWERED ACTIVISION'S CALL FOR A NEW KING WITH ALL DUE HASTE...

DETAILS

GENRE

Strategy

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Activision

PUBLISHER

Activision

DUE

4th Qtr 2000

URL

www.activision.com/
games/ctp2



➔ **Sid Meier had better watch out.** With the release early last year of *Civilization: Call To Power* and now its imminent sequel, Activision is making a concerted effort to muscle in on what was previously Meier's exclusive territory.

In fact, it might surprise many to hear that *Call To Power* actually outsold Sid Meier's *Alpha Centauri* - and by a considerable margin as well. Both of Meier's next games, *Dinosaurs* and *Civilization III* (yes, it is coming), remain miles from completion, thus presenting Activision's rival forces the perfect opportunity to grasp the turn-based strategy crown.

Talk it over

However, the coup will need to be staged without the name *Civilization* at the helm. Thanks to legal manoeuvrings far too complex - and, quite frankly, tedious - to enter into here, Activision has been obliged to remove from its game's title the word that has become synonymous with painfully deep, hardcore strategy for the past decade. Hence, *Call To Power II*, as it will now be known. It will certainly be interesting to see how it fares without this titular cachet.

To ensure the *Call To Power* series not only survives but prospers into its second iteration, the in-house Activision development team has addressed the concerns some had with the first. For a start, the interface issues have been ironed out, resulting in a more intuitive and less cumbersome affair. As the annoying necessity of constantly de-selecting units was the original's only glaring fault, this bodes well for the sequel's quality. As does the greater attention given to diplomacy. Always a tricky piece of the design of any strategy game, the diplomatic options need to be extensive and varied without the player's exchanges with other leaders becoming unpredictable and unrealistic. *Call To Power II*'s negotiation model allows for proposals and counter-proposals and the ability to respond via a range of tones (from friendly to hostile), all amid the added consideration of geopolitical borders.

Balance of power

Elsewhere it seems to be a case of tweaking and fine-tuning the already accomplished gameplay. The timeline begins in 4,000 BC and concludes 300 years into our future.

Yet in a decision sure to surprise all but the most pessimistic stargazers, the entire game remains truly earthbound. One can only assume the absence of space exploration makes for an easier time balancing the game.

Speaking of balance, much thought has gone into providing varied routes to victory, whether it be via military, scientific, economic or cultural means. The challenge here is not so much to make trading your way to power just as feasible as fighting, but to make it equally enjoyable. Few strategy games have even come close in this regard, and *Call To Power II* faces the extra difficulty (but in a good way, of course) of possessing an excellent combat system, one that is significantly in advance of its Meier-influenced competitors.

If Activision achieved its goals, then this is one call we'll find very tough to resist.

David Wildgoose

WHY CALL TO POWER II DEMANDS A SECOND LOOK...

➔ The first in the series was a rough gem...

➔ ...that's been vigorously polished for this sequel

➔ There hasn't been a great turn-based strategy game for ages

➔ That classic *Civilization* gameplay remains

FIRST LOOK!

Delta Force: Land Warrior

NOVALOGIC'S FIRST TWO SHOTS WERE SLIGHTLY OFF, BUT THIS ONE'S RIGHT ON TARGET

DETAILS

GENRE

Tactical Shooter

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Novalogic

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

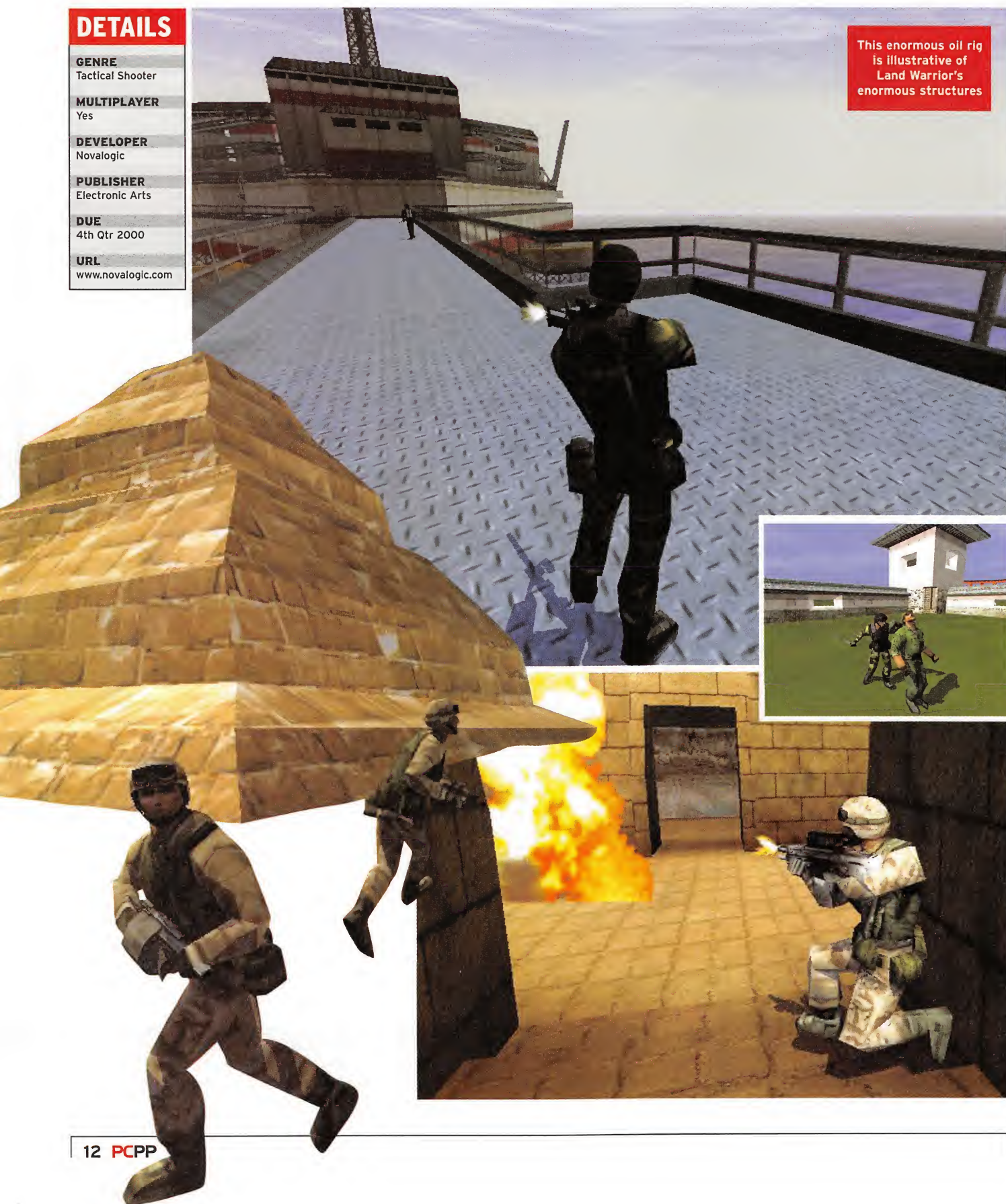
DUE

4th Qtr 2000

URL

www.novalogic.com

This enormous oil rig
is illustrative of
Land Warrior's
enormous structures





Tutankhamen became suspicious of the slaves' drinking water

Anyone who believes that violence can't be therapeutic obviously hasn't traveled with CityRail

➔ Novalogic's Delta Force games have distinguished themselves as some of the most popular tactical shooters in existence, particularly within the multiplayer community. The games' realistically undulating terrain and expansive maps have taken the tactical shooter out of its traditional CQB (*That's 'Close Quarters Battle', acronym fans - Ed*) domain and planted it firmly in the realm of the sniper.

Neither title was perfect, however, and both have been criticised for their use of voxel graphics. Although the use of voxels allows the portrayal of landscapes that are far more life-like than anything constructed from polygons, the resulting performance hit was enough to confine enjoyment of both titles to those with high end PCs.

Using a new, 3D accelerated engine, Land Warrior will feature realistic terrain certain to rival that of its predecessors, but this won't be at the expense of the impressive view distances so critical to this type of game. The only casualty of the introduction of the new engine will be the overlaid grass textures that served to conceal the player in Delta Force 2.

Though, in light of the dramatic increase in game speed, and the enormous improvement in the size and interior detail of structures, this trade-off seems more than acceptable.

Bring in the specialist

Land Warrior will depart even further from the established formula with the introduction of five distinct characters. These characters will specialise in particular forms of warfare, including sniping, demolition and underwater operations, and will benefit greatly when employing related weapons. For example, the sniper will be able to pick off distant targets with relative ease, but other characters will find their aim with a sniper rifle adversely affected by their own breathing patterns. Similarly, the heavy weapons expert will find his aim when firing a heavy machine gun to be fairly steady, but other characters will be forced to correct their aim to compensate for the weapon's recoil. These character classes and their associated advantages will carry over to multiplayer, which will bring even greater variety to that aspect of the game.

As is to be expected, Land Warrior will offer a number of new weapons, including



a silenced variant of the PSG-1 sniper rifle, a semi automatic grenade launcher, and a submachine gun with a 100 round magazine! The AT4 (a modernised version of the LAW rocket), a fully automatic shotgun, several new assault weapons and the silenced SOCOM pistol will round out the arsenal. And, according to Novalogic, there is the distinct possibility that additional weapons will be introduced during development.

With eight different multiplayer modes to be offered over Novalogic's Novaworld service, and the promise of even more ways to dispatch unwary enemies from a kilometre away, odds are that Land Warrior will prove to be the best Delta Force game yet.

Brett Robinson

WHY DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR DEMANDS A SECOND LOOK...

➔ It's based on the joint project between Novalogic and the Army

➔ It will be possible to switch combat roles mid-mission

➔ 3D acceleration will make it accessible to low-end PC owners

➔ It's got the only thing cooler than sniping - silenced sniping

FIRST LOOK!

Peacemakers

THE VIDEO CAMERA IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

DETAILS**GENRE**

Realtime Strategy

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPERMathematiques
Appliquees**PUBLISHER**

Ubi Soft

DUE

1st Qtr 2001

URLwww.ubisoft.com



➔ Using the media to manipulate the masses is certainly nothing new. Since the creation of the first printing press, the media has served as one of the most powerful propaganda weapons in existence. Perhaps one of the best examples of this can be found in the 1991 Desert Storm conflict, when the likes of CNN and the BBC had the world convinced that the allied forces were conducting a surgical war against Iraq.

The Western forces were supposedly using only 'smart' munitions allegedly capable of discriminating between legitimate military targets and day care centres. In reality, less than 2% of the munitions deployed against Iraq were 'smart', with the majority simply being unguided explosives dropped in an indiscriminate fashion - a process known as carpet bombing.

Spin doctors

Peacemakers, the current title for this work-in-progress, will be the first realtime strategy title to address the crucial role played by the media in armed conflicts. Successfully completing specific missions will hinge as much on an ability to manipulate the civilian population

as it will on battlefield superiority. Without carefully crafted media coverage, the player's own population may protest their country's involvement in the conflict and engage in demonstrations reminiscent of those staged during the Vietnam War. But with a crack team of spin doctors feverishly working around the clock, even the destruction of a civilian medical facility could be attributed to any number of fabricated external factors.

The political defeat of a rival country's ruling party can prove just as sweet as a military victory, and achieving this will be a distinct possibility in Peacemakers. The game's developer promises that extremely advanced AI will render individual combat units virtually autonomous, minimising the need for micromanagement and allowing

the player to focus on the theatre of operations as a whole.

Gameplay will be further streamlined by the fact that commanders under the player's control will eventually become delegates able to issue orders to subordinate units without the need for player intervention. The AI of the enemy will be geared such that anticipation of the player's moves will influence its use of tactics, and it will learn favourite tactics used by the player and devise means to combat them. The result of this, according to Mathematiques Appliquees, will be that no two battles will ever be won using the same strategy twice. Due early next year, Peacemakers is one RTS game we'll be keeping a close eye on.

Brett Robinson



WHY PEACEMAKERS DEMANDS A SECOND LOOK...

➔ It will change the way you look at news coverage

➔ Advanced AI will make unit monitoring a thing of the past

➔ Its unique take on the genre is especially refreshing

➔ News choppers will make calibrating SAM's easy



Spotlight

GAMING NEWS FROM ALL QUARTERS OF THE GLOBE

Thief Storms Back

TWO MORE IMMERSIVE REALITY SIMS IN THE PIPELINE

In exciting (but not exactly unexpected) news, Eidos and Ion Storm have officially announced the development of *Thief 3* and *Deus Ex 2*.

In the wake of the closure of Looking Glass Studios, several former Looking Glass employees have been snapped up by the Austin arm of Ion Storm and immediately assigned to the *Thief 3* and *Deus Ex 2* development teams. Harvey "Witchboy" Smith, Lead Designer of *Deus Ex*, will adopt the role of Project Director of the sequel, and ex-Looking Glass programmer, Chris Carollo,

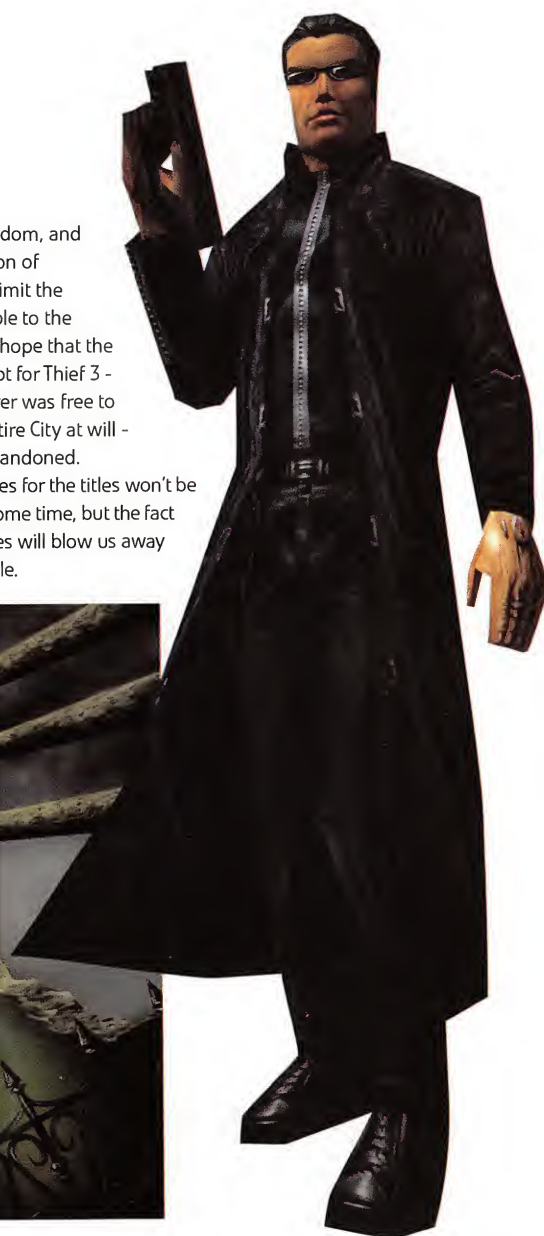
will spearhead development as Lead Programmer. Two other former Looking Glass programmers will pump out *Deus Ex 2* code, while Steve Powers, Monte Martinez and Ricardo Bare will reprise their roles as designers. Surprisingly, Warren Spector will be overseeing both projects simultaneously. But we're confident that lending his genius to both projects will prove extremely beneficial.

While very little concrete information on *Deus Ex 2* can be found at this early stage, *Thief 3* data is even scarcer. However, what Ion Storm promises is markedly increased

depth and freedom, and the minimisation of incidents that limit the options available to the player. We just hope that the original concept for *Thief 3* - where the player was free to wander the entire City at will - hasn't been abandoned.

Release dates for the titles won't be predicted for some time, but the fact that both games will blow us away seems inevitable.

Garrett lives!
Garrett lives!
Etc!



Doomed Game

ID FORFEITS QUEST EXPERIENCE POINTS

id Software's Graeme Devine recently revealed the specifics of the title the company was working on before it abandoned the project in favour of creating a new Doom game.

Tentatively titled Quest, the game would have "combined the RPG massively multiplayer ideas of a game like Everquest with the multiple server features of a Quake-style game," said Devine. "Quest would have had a small party of five, like a fighter, barbarian and magic user, and the players would sign on to a Quest server and have it be a different server with different missions and quests. You would have been there on your own - you and

your five buddies against the world. Each server would have been run by a person akin to a Dungeon Master in Dungeons & Dragons who would have been in control of the environments the players found themselves in, right down to the rats crawling around on the ground."

Such a concept seems intriguing in the extreme and, for us at least, holds greater appeal than yet another iteration of the Doom series. Devine's displeasure with the decision to halt development of Quest was revealed in the final sentence of his statement which simply read, "I hope that somebody makes that game". Like countless others, we're inclined to agree.



SPLINTERED

Melbourne-based developer, Stromlo Entertainment, has closed its doors following EA's withdrawal of financial backing for the Descent-esque shooter, Splinter. EA allegedly felt that Splinter too closely resembled Forsaken, which sold poorly worldwide. Despite the fact that Splinter was nearing completion, EA pulled the plug, forcing the company to undergo liquidation. Several former Stromlo employees have now moved on to other local companies including Auran and Blue Tongue.

The Settlers IV

BLUE BYTE NOT READY TO SETTLE DOWN JUST YET

The lads from Blue Byte Software are now working on the fourth incarnation of the hugely popular Settlers series. Subtitled The Dark Tribe, Settlers IV will chronicle the evil Morbus' efforts to rid the Earth of all things green and leafy. As is to be expected, the game will introduce a staggering array of new units and structures, and require a more measured approach to combat. Visuals will also receive the update treatment, as will Settlers IV's multiplayer options. The game's estimated release date stands at December 2000, but early 2001 seems a bit more likely.



No man is an island, but the little blokes live on one



FRIENDLESS SKIES

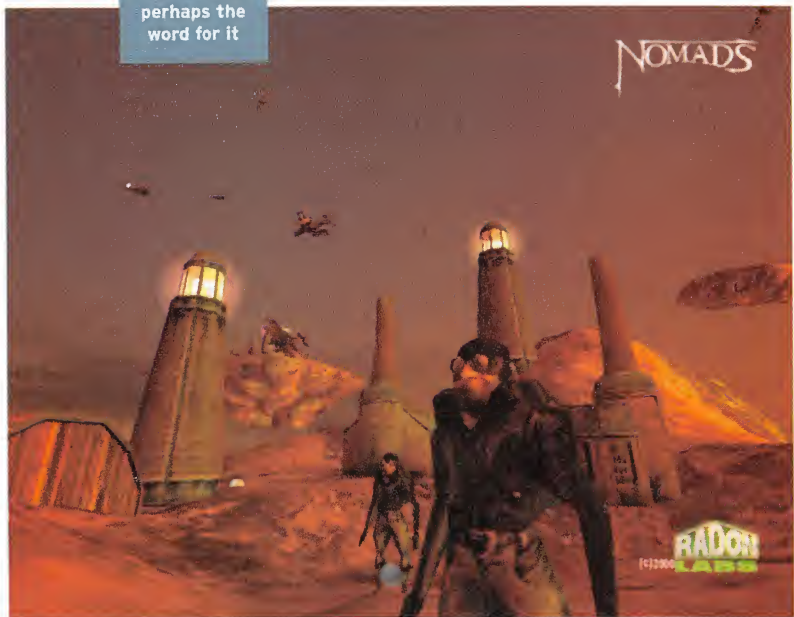
The intensely anticipated B-17 The Mighty Eighth will no longer feature any multiplayer capabilities. According to Hasbro, this lamentable decision arose from the extreme difficulty the developer experienced in compressing game data for transmission. Though hobbled by this omission, B-17 II looks like it will still be a phenomenally enjoyable game. But, for now, a moment of silence is in order.

Nomads

STRATOSPHERIC WHAT?

Radon Labs, the developer of Urban Assault, is toiling away on an interesting new game that will combine elements of realtime strategy with action/adventure and roleplaying styles of gameplay. The most compelling aspect of Nomads will be its stratospheric milieu, which will see the player construct factories and bases on enormous floating islands. These factories will produce combat units including zeppelins, biplanes and the like. The player will therefore have the ability to pilot individual units or command squadrons of them. Although Radon has yet to find a publisher for Nomad, it is anticipated that the game will be completed in late 2001.

Bonkers is perhaps the word for it



Project Overdrive

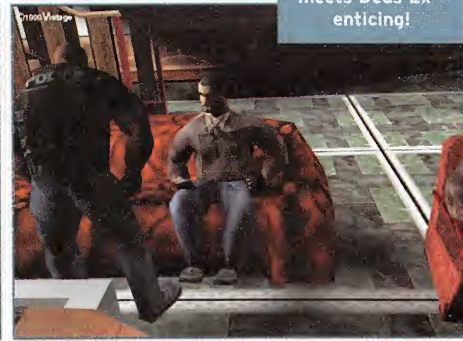
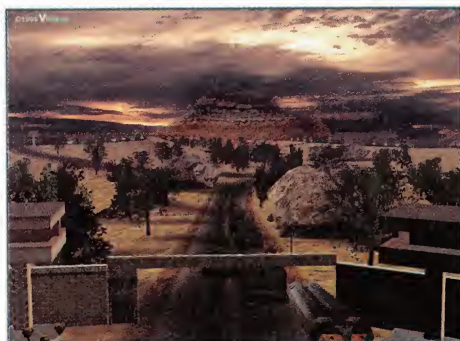
WALK ACROSS THE WORLD IN SEVEN HOURS

Russian developer Vistage is presently working on an intriguing action game that promises to redefine the term 'immersive world'. Project Overdrive will hybridise the firstperson shooter and driving genres, offering the type of gameplay that may very well revolutionise the industry. The extremely ambitious title will exactly model an entire city - from smog-shrouded

skyscrapers in the CBD to tranquil forests on the periphery - that will take seven real-world hours to cross on foot! The game will offer the player unprecedented freedom, making it possible to enter any building, steal any vehicle and undertake any number of nefarious assignments for local crime syndicates. Barring any unforeseen delays, Project Overdrive will grace our PCs early next year.



Grand Theft Auto meets Deus Ex - enticing!



Stupid Invaders

THIS TIME IT'S THE ALIENS COPPING A PROBING

The dying adventure genre may soon experience a resurgence with the impending release of Stupid Invaders. Inspired by the Space Goofs TV series, Stupid Invaders will pit five bizarre aliens against the evil Dr Sakarine. Like so many mad scientists, Sakarine wishes to subject the clueless quintet to a barrage of horrendous experiments. It'll be up to the player to see that the intergalactic infiltrators escape the clutches of the Dr unscathed. With sharp, colourful graphics that could only be described as 'trippy', Stupid Invaders seems destined for success upon its Xmas 2000 release.





Wait! Aren't
Druids supposed
to have beards?



Add-ons

NEW EXPANSIONS COMING

At this year's ECTS, Blizzard has announced the inevitable expansion pack for Diablo II. Set in the Barbarian Highlands, the pack will see the player treading the path of destruction wrought by Diablo's brother, Baal. In addition to a swag of new quests, the expansion pack will introduce two new characters - the Assassin and the Druid - as well as more than ten new monster species and hundreds of new items. Those spectacular cinematics will also make a welcome return. No official release date has been announced, but Blizzard is hoping to have the expansion pack completed within the first half of 2001.

It's not often that a game is blessed with more than one expansion pack, but this will certainly be the case with the glorious Rollercoaster Tycoon. The Loopy Landscapes add-on will include new rides, amenities, themes, attractions and scenarios. For the sick bastards among us, this will mean even more opportunities for creating havoc. And as an added bonus, Loopy Landscapes will also ship with the original Corkscrew Follies (or Added Attractions, as it was called locally) add-on, for those who don't already own it. Tremendous value for money - especially for the die-hard fans - Loopy Landscapes should appear on store shelves within the next few weeks.

Big Huge Publishing Deal

REYNOLDS SIGNS UP WITH MICROSOFT

Earlier this year, several former Firaxis staff members opened up a development studio of their own known as Big Huge Games. The small studio was founded by Brian Reynolds, co-designer of Alpha Centauri and one of the talented people behind Civilization II and Colonization. Big Huge Games' work on an as yet unknown

strategy title has now been given a boost with the announcement that Microsoft will be publishing a succession of titles developed by the company. This announcement followed Microsoft's purchase of a minority stake in the Maryland-based developer. According to Reynolds, the fruits of Big Huge Games' labour won't be revealed until the

estimated completion of the game in 2002, but specific details on the game's features will be unveiled in the very near future. Reynolds went on to state that Big Huge Games will be developing titles aimed specifically at the mass market, and did not rule out the possibility of his company developing for Microsoft's X-Box console.

World Sports Cars

EMPIRE'S LATEST MAY BECOME THE GENRE'S GREATEST

Empire Interactive looks set to raise the realism bar with its latest racing sim, World Sports Cars. The game will place the player behind the wheel of some of the world's fastest automobiles, and allow them to push their abilities to the limit on several gruelling circuits. Not exactly revolutionary stuff, but the game will also permit the player to take their vehicle of choice off the race track and onto the surrounding streets!

With just enough mechanical tweekage to put Gran Turismo to shame, World Sports Cars will also excel in the physics and damage modelling departments. And if you think it couldn't get any better than this, then check out the graphics for yourself!



UBI-MENSCH

Red Storm Entertainment has been acquired by industry giant Ubisoft. However, the celebrated founder of the tactical shooter genre will retain its autonomy by operating as an independent, wholly owned subsidiary. Thus, development of Tom Clancy properties (such as the venerable Rainbow Six) will continue unabated.



DEVELOPER DIARY

Irrational Games Australia on...
Freedom Force

AFTER DESIGNING THE BRILLIANT SYSTEM SHOCK 2, IRRATIONAL SET UP AN OFFICE IN CANBERRA. THIS IS THE TALE OF THE TEAM'S FIRST GAME...

Hi and welcome to the PCPP exclusive developer diary for Freedom Force! We aim to write a regular column here that will give you an insight into how we go about making this game. This isn't going to be your regular hype loaded PR spiel. We'll focus less on the great features and cool things we are putting into the game and talk a little more about why we are making certain decisions and what it's like to be a games developer.

A little background first: who are we? We're Irrational Games Australia. You may know us from a game called System Shock 2.

Irrational is currently working on a PS2 title, the Lost, but has also opened a new office in Australia - and that's us. So we're an interesting mixture of experienced developers and fresh young faces. That's always a recipe for great things, I think.

The concept

Well, enough background - what are we actually doing? In this column I want to talk a little bit about the process of turning an idea into a game. Lots of people come up with great game designs all the time but very few of these ever get burned onto a CD and put on a store shelf. Where do the real shipping game designs come from?

Many game ideas are sequels - like Shock 2. Sequels appeal to publishers because they are far less risky for the publisher than an original title. Game players generally like sequels for the same reason - they're getting a known quantity. Of course, the problem with sequels is that they can get stagnant and boring - and from a development point of view they are less fun because there's far less creative work for the developer.

Many other games are licensed products. These aim to cash in on characters or worlds created in other media. Sometimes publishers do something really daring and spin a licence into new genre like X-Com Interceptor or Barbie Combat Simulator. But let's face it, licensed products, with a few obvious exceptions, are generally uninspired efforts. It's not hard to see why this is so - developers have to work within pretty tight constraints, often

having to get all content cleared through a 3rd party who really isn't interested in the game.

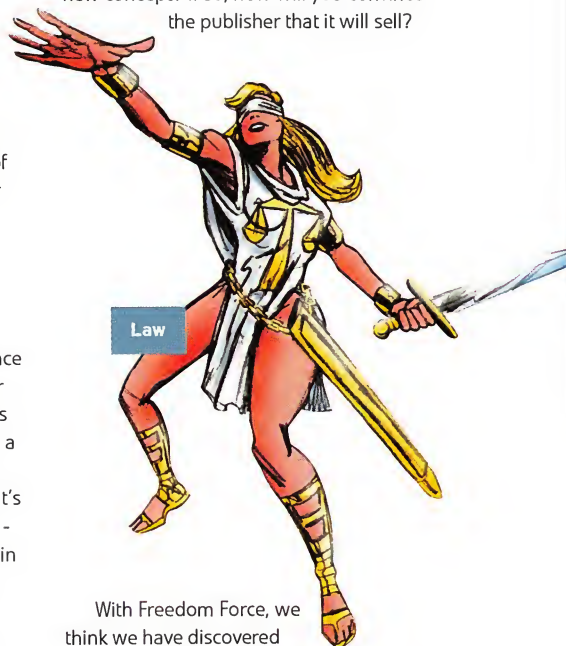
The rarest of all game concepts are new concepts. Within this category an even rarer game is the game that branches out into a new genre of gameplay. Most games are fairly straightforward reinterpretations of established gameplay ideas: realtime strategy, firstperson shooting and so on. To be allowed to create a new form of gameplay or a new genre is a rare luxury for a developer because it's so risky for the publisher.

A super idea

So, in creating a new game concept you first have to think how you are going to pitch the idea to a publisher. What is going to sell this idea to the publisher? Do you have a licence? Do you plan to make a sequel? Are you doing a twist on an established genre? If so, how will you distinguish yourself from the rest of the pack? Do you have a brilliant new concept? If so, how will you convince the publisher that it will sell?



Microwave



Law

With Freedom Force, we think we have discovered an interesting niche that is both clearly popular and yet strangely untapped. Our gameplay contains interesting novel elements (destructible terrain), a mix of established mechanics (RPG systems, realtime tactical combat) and a genre that is popular but under-represented (comic book superheroes). Those are the basic ingredients that we mixed to get this game from our heads and into the publisher's marketing plan.

Of course, once the game has been sold to the publisher, one commences the long process of actually building the monster that has been dreamed up. This process is largely a process of compromise along with a large measure of blood, sweat and tears. We'll talk more about that in the next edition of the diary, coming soon!

JONATHAN CHEY

Managing Director Irrational Games
Australia

Manbot

The Bullet

A diabolical cult... a malevolent pool...
a terrifying plan.



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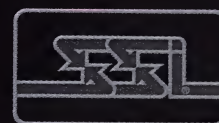
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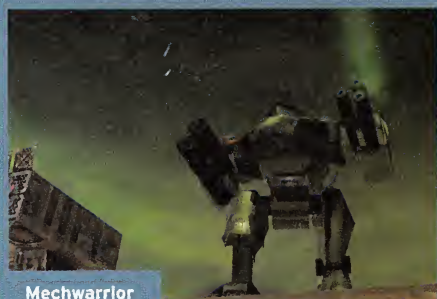


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No One Lives Forever



Mechwarrior

Coming soon...

PCPP'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE GAMING MONTHS AHEAD

OCTOBER

Anachronox (Ozisoft)
Blair Witch Vol 1 (Jack of all Games)
C&C Red Alert 2 (Electronic Arts)
Crimson Skies (Microsoft)
Metal Gear Solid (Microsoft)
Midtown Madness 2 (Microsoft)
No One Lives Forever (Electronic Arts)
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force (Activision)
Tony Hawk 2 (Activision)
Tribes 2 (Havas)

NOVEMBER

Alice (Electronic Arts)
B-17 2: The Mighty Eighth (Hasbro)
Black & White (Electronic Arts)
Blair Witch Vol 2 (Jack of all Games)
Colin McRae Rally 2 (Ozisoft)
Giants: Citizen Kabuto (Interplay)
Quake III: Team Arena (Activision)
Rune (Jack of all Games)

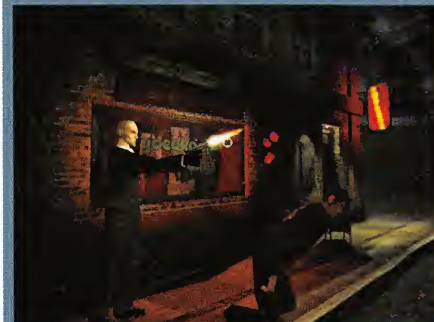
DECEMBER

Commandos 2 (Ozisoft)
MechWarrior (Microsoft)
Obi-Wan (Playcorp)
Oni (Jack of all Games)
Sacrifice (Interplay)
Star Topia (Ozisoft)

JANUARY

Alone In The Dark (Infogrames)
Hitman (Ozisoft)
Loose Cannon (Microsoft)
MechCommander 2 (Microsoft)
Return to Castle Wolfenstein (Activision)
Simsville (Electronic Arts)

Startopia



Hitman

Australia's most wanted

The monkey's have it! To our immense surprise - and, it must be said, pleasure - Peter Molyneux's glorified Tamagotchi leaps to the top of the tree this month. With that pesky little Diablo game out of the way, there was absolutely no stopping the combined force of a giant cow, oversized tiger and mammoth ape. Just below it seems there are still plenty of foolhardy types content to wait... and wait... and wait... for Duke and Warcraft 3. But will you still be voting for them this time next year? Our money says you will. Further down there's a return for the spunky looking Giants and a new entry for Simsville.

This month's winner, Sally Jameson of Doncaster, VIC, has won herself a copy of Simsville, which should be arriving in January.



Send your Top Five Most Wanted Games to PC Powerplay at:
wanted@pcpowerplay.com.au

- 1 **BLACK & WHITE**
- 2 Duke Nukem Forever
- 3 Warcraft 3
- 4 Commandos 2
- 5 Team Fortress 2
- 6 Star Trek: Elite Force
- 7 Giants
- 8 Halo
- 9 Freelancer
- 10 Simsville

Hall of fame

PCPP'S MOST RECENT GOLD AWARDED GAMES - BUY THEM ALL!



● Score 93 ● Issue #53

Baldur's Gate II

Interplay

Classic roleplaying courtesy of Bioware, Black Isle and the 3rd Edition AD&D rules.



● Score 91 ● Issue #53

Earth 2150

Mattel Interactive

Extensive and exhaustive, this is one of the most accomplished realtime strategy titles in a long time.



● Score 90 ● Issue #52

Ground Control

Jack of all Games

Swedish developer Massive redefines realtime strategy with intense tactical combat and a glorious 3D engine.

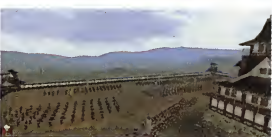


● Score 98 ● Issue #51

Deus Ex

Ozisoft

Is it an RPG? Or is it an FPS? Deus Ex lets you decide how you want to play it. The best game of all time, in our humble opinion.



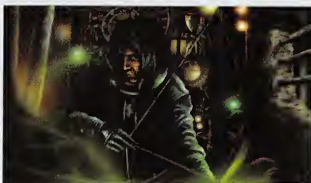
● Score 92 ● Issue #50

Shogun: Total War

Electronic Arts

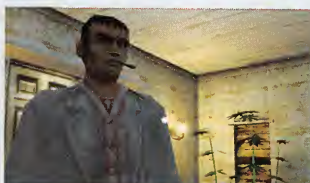
Demanding swift tactical acumen and heavy strategic thought in equal amounts, Shogun is deep wargaming without peer.

Our most wanted



Thief III

David: Take your time, guys



Hitman

Brett: Pass me my garrotte



X-Com: Alliance

Hugh: I'm an abductee



Silent Hunter 2

Major Des: Dive! Dive! Dive!

CHARTS

THIS MONTHS BEST SELLERS

The Official Australian PC Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

July 2000

Top 20 Best Selling Full Price PC Games

(>\$29.95 inc. GST)

Position	Game Title	Game Type
1	★ Diablo 2	RPG
2	★ Icewind Dale	RPG
3	↓ The Sims	Strategy
4	↑ Sim Mania Pack	Bundle
5	↓ Cmmnd. & Cnqr. Tiberian Sun	Strategy
6	↓ Age of Empires 2	Strategy
7	★ Vampire: The Masquerade	Adventure
8	↓ Shogun: Total War	Strategy
9	★ Dark Reign 2	Strategy
10	★ Grand Prix 3	Racing
11	★ Motocross Madness 2	Racing
12	↑ Baldurs Gate	RPG
13	★ Deus Ex	RPG
14	★ Sim City 3000	Strategy
15	★ Croc 2: Legend of The Gobbos	Platform
16	↓ Cmmnd. & Cnqr. World Warfare	Strategy
17	★ Sonic/Garfield/Baku Pack	Bundle
18	★ Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines	Strategy
19	↓ Age of Empires	Strategy
20	★ Dune 2000	Strategy

Inform

↻ New entry ↻ Non mover
↑ Up from last month ↓ Down from last month

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THIS.



Team AI is made seamless by the Quake III Arena™ engine. Characters react, adapt, and give their lives for a common goal.



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The Quake III Arena engine provides detailed, curved surfaces aboard Borg cubes and other beautifully-rendered ships.

The Quake III Arena™ engine goes to new frontiers for the first time!



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INBOX

Letters Tip: Don't mow the lawn with a vacuum cleaner

Write to: PC PowerPlay Letters, 78 Renwick St, Redfern 2016. **Email:** letters@pcpowerplay.com.au



F1 2000: Truly Grand Prix 3's poorer cousin

Implemented particularly

Hey y'all. Love your magazine. Do I win a prize now? (A prize for the most cliched opening line, perhaps? - Ed.) Damn!

Anyway, I just wanted to ask why games developers bother to pump out those useless F1 "simulations", and I use that term very loosely indeed. Take F1 2000 for example. It comes from EA Sports, who indeed has developed some pedigree in the last few years. It features the FIA license, and it is based on the 2000 season. It all seems to be in place, except they overlooked one thing. Actually making a good game.

I read with interest some reviews of it, and they said that in some aspects it has better physics than GP2, still the best game of all time (IMO). So I went and tried it out (hired it for \$5 overnight). I installed it,

drove the thing for about half the time it took to install and

then removed it from my machine, where it will never find it's sorry ass parked ever again.

"Controlling" the car is based more on luck than skill, and why is there a lag with the braking? You say, "I want to brake... now". The game, however, decides that no, it does not want to brake at that particular moment. It hasn't finished doing its hair or make-up or something, and will get around to braking in its own time when it is good and ready.

The tracks bear little resemblance to their real-life counterparts and the graphics and sound are poor at best. The only good thing about the game is the damage, which I thought was implemented particularly well.

Do they even bother to look at what comes before? Yes, here we have game-x, which is widely believed to be the best in the genre. Now, we really should make something better than this, but that would take way too much time and effort. How about we rush out a half-finished useless piece of crap and hype it up so that stacks of people go and buy it. Yes! That is what we will do! Ha ha! Why didn't we think of this before?

Shaun Hodges



Yet the twist in the tale, you'll be relieved to hear, is that stacks of people didn't go and buy it. Fortunately they all seem to have chosen Grand Prix 3 instead.

The reset button

I bought Diablo II the day it came out, and have been trying to play it ever since. After waiting three years for it, I'm amazed at how often the game locks up my system. It happens every hour or so, and nothing I or my tech mate does can fix it. I have a TNT2 and

a SoundBlaster card, and the bright pink 'after thought' piece of paper that came in the box tells owners of these cards to install the latest drivers. We did that, as well as run Scandisk after every freeze up (Scandisk finds errors after every freeze), and I've uninstalled and reinstalled the game twice.

When it freezes the computer, the only way out of the freeze is to hit the reset button, something I have had to do about ten times a day since buying this product. I'm not going to play it any more because I can't afford to



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Issue the contents

You asked for our opinions on the direction PCPP is taking, so here goes:

1. I love the light-hearted tone your magazine takes - it's part of what makes it distinctive. But I strongly feel this should only be the case where it doesn't detract from the magazine's utility. I'm trying to decide whether I should buy "Dogs of War". Your review gave it an 81 with an "against" of "It's not called War Monkeys. Boo...!". I find it hard to believe that warranted a 19% markdown.

2. Editing. Obviously the occasional error is unavoidable, but some blatantly obvious ones seem to be the norm at PCPP. In Issue #51 the CD Guide section on MDK2 is on some sort of hunting game instead, in an earlier issue the contents page labelled a picture clearly from Shogun with the page number and title of "Diablo II". And I've lost count of the number of times I've seen "caption caption" under a picture.

3. I'd personally like to see more on Tech, but unless I miss my guess PCPP will be focussing on a different topic each issue and one of these will be tech, so I'm fine with that.

4. The review section seems to have shrunk - or is it just that there



wasn't much out this month? That's all of the bad stuff. The good stuff is that the bad stuff is all exceptions and I 99% like the new direction PCPP is headed in. Keep up the good work.

Keith Bissett

Thanks for the compliments, but to address your concerns:

1. We just couldn't resist the monkey reference. Hopefully you found the actual review text more than justified the score.

2. With our strict, new, proofreading nanoaugmentation installed, such incidents are a thing of the past.

3. Enjoy the new Tech section.

4. It's a cyclical thing. Most publishers hold their big releases for the end of the year, meaning that the winter months tend to be rather slow.

THE TOP 100: THE RESPONSE

As I speak

You guys would not know a good game if it slapped you in the face. How the hell did Messiah get 54th and Thief II get 4th? They should be the other way round. Messiah is soooo good.

You guys suck. How the hell did Quake III get in there? Get over it, it ain't that good.

The worst game on the list is System Shock 2. You have got to be kiddin' me that it was scary. I finished it in two weeks and I barely even played it. How can you piss your pants over a game like that?

I have every game in the Top 10 and half of them are shit. What, you like playin' shit games? Play Diablo II and Messiah and Dogs of War.

Owww, my god, I am reading this as I speak... The Sims. The goddam Sims. Whoever thought of the concept for that deserves to die.

Andrew Eggins

Right, you, outside - now!

Comes in 9th

To the brain dead vegetables who saw fit to attempt to compile the Top 100 Games of All Time. Take your pills and go back to sleep...

I cannot believe that Quake did not rank in the top ten, let alone the top 100. You show a shambler standing on top of a podium, implying that Quake is the number one game of all time (which it is), yet it doesn't even get a mention in the list itself.

Quake II comes in 63rd. How you worked that out I'll never know. And Quake III comes in 9th. But where was Quake? I've read your Top 100 six times now, and Quake still isn't there...

Is there something wrong with you people? How can a game that brought so much to the FPS community not make it into the Top 100? Quake brought us 3D modelling as opposed to bitmaps. Quake brought us great single player games. But its best feature was multiplayer! How many of us started our multiplayer lives on Quake? There were so many mods for



Quake. How many of us have stayed up all night playing Clan Arena or Team Fortress? Quake has to be one of the most popular games of all time. It should've been number one, but you gave Deus Ex that title.

You say that the games that made it in were "the most playable, entertaining, challenging and downright fun". Was Quake not all of the above and more? I rest my case

Simon Turner

You seemed to have missed the point of the list. Why would you play Quake today when you could play Quake II's superior single player game or one of Quake III's

brilliant multiplayer options? The Top 100 is about acknowledging the best, not the most important.

Fat monkey's ass

Although you're right about Deus EX. It kicks the fat monkey's ass down the stairs then back up. Have you tried to kill everyone in UNATCO and survive?

Ryan Schlegel

Yes, but it's more fun trying to kill everyone in the Underworld bar and Free Clinic in Hell's Kitchen.

Just about right

I wanted to let you know that I think you got the Top 100 just about right. But I believe System Shock 2 deserved 2nd place next to Deus Ex. Otherwise it was excellent. Keep up the good work.

Michael Haysman

And on that warm and fuzzy note... Bye!

replace my harddrive when it goes eventually. I have looked through the tech forum on the Blizzard web site and there are heaps of people with the same problem.

Now, with patch v1.02 installed, it freezes up every ten minutes or so. Blizzard obviously hasn't tried to fix the problem, and despite scores of complaints from gamers suffering the same problem posted on the Blizzard Tech Support Forum, Blizzard has not said anything about trying to get a fix ready. This to me is totally unacceptable.

I think everyone contemplating buying this game should know it is really a beta version rather than a finished product. And if they have a TNT2 or a SB, they should seriously reconsider buying this version of it because it may not run on their system.

After waiting three years, and spending \$100 on it (GST is another story), I am seriously pissed off by the product and Blizzard's attitude.

Mark Yan



Its rightful context

I cannot believe that you could be so naive as to publish that image of Stevie Killcreek (sic). Do you honestly realise how female readers are going to feel about it? Is it your intention to become a boys only magazine? I have no problems with "mens" magazines or the background image in its rightful context, but I cannot believe that you do not realise just how misogynistic (go look that word up (*Oh, the irony - Ed*)) the doctored picture you have printed is. Do you believe that it is appropriate for your publication?

As editor, David, it is your responsibility to control the content of the magazine and whether you realise it or not you have screwed up. I suggest a formal apology to the female readership. If you have any credibility (sic) left you will publish this letter and some form of justification or response because I can garrantee (sic) that I am not the only person who is thinking this way.

Nathan Thompson

The doctored image of which you speak was meant as a satirical joke. Ion Storm had used Killcreek's "ass" to promote Daikatana, so we just wanted to show who the real "ass" was -



namely, John Romero. Believe it or not, Nathan, yours was the only letter of complaint we received.

Aspect of stealth

I was reading through the issue that had the Top 50 games of all time and I noticed that Thief: The Dark Project scored in at only 3rd. I'm sorry, maybe I'm just an unusual person, but I think the only game that surpasses Thief is Thief II. There is a reason for this:

Thief introduced a concept that although was well known, was not widely focused upon or even used. I'm talking about stealth. Games like N64's Goldeneye have a slight aspect of stealth (the "shoot them quietly" sort), but no game has actually had stealth as a major point.

Wolfenstein 3D and Doom revolutionised the way firstperson shooters are played and many, many

BYTE SIZE

If you wish to sue me (keep in mind that I am a poor student), then imagine that I received a falsified letter from John Dewhurst giving me permission to pimp Tony.

Peeholio PooSlice

games have been based on the same concept - some to spectacular effect (Quake, Half-Life, Unreal, Dark Forces) - but none of the newer games have really changed the way the games are played. Thief and its successor have changed the way games are played, among other things, making the player think before, and during, acting.

The point I make is this: games come and games go. Some are fun and some are not. But every once in a while, a game is created that not only surpasses boundaries, but redefines them. Thief and Thief II are truly examples of this sort of game. May the Hammer fall on the unrighteous!

Christopher Aynsley

The Top 50? Yikes, that was in January's issue. I wonder what you're going to make of the Top 100 when you get round to reading it in nine months time...



CREATE YOUR OWN LEGEND

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Hawk's back. And this time he's brought new pros (Caballero, Koston, Mullen), new tricks (Bluntslides, BS/FS Noseslides + Tailslides, Hurricanes, Heelflip Variants, Melon Grabs, Airwalks, Judos, etc.) and new technology (Real-Time Skatepark Editor, Create-A-Skater). Build a skatepark in your house. Then shred it (the park, not the house). Build your own pro (mullet or not, you decide). Then compete against the real ones. You'll also find sick new terrain, insane videos and a Career Mode where you earn cash money to move up in the rankings. THPS2, taking you to levels that were once reserved for mere legends.

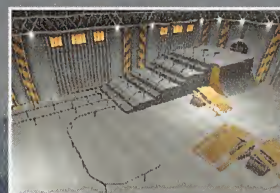
OVERVIEW:



2-PLAYER MODE
2-Player Modes and
Single-Player Career Mode



NEW TRICKS + TERRAIN
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and New Skaters



SKATEPARK EDITOR
3D Real-Time
Skatepark Editor

PlayStation screen shot shown

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Server

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE INTERNET



Welcome to Server, PCPP's venture into the world of online communication. You may have noticed that the section appeared for the first time last month in what was essentially a public beta. Allow me to now to formally introduce the section and myself. I've been manning the Tech section as Hugh's occasional wingman, and while I'm not abandoning that area entirely, my emphasis will now be on all things connecting you to the world. Each month we'll let you know what's happening around the net - stuff that's not necessarily game-related, but we're not talking share floats here. We'll keep you updated about broadband and look at what a particular ISP can offer you. You'll also be presented with in-depth features on the people and ideas that keep the net interesting. Come in, we think you might like what you find inside...
seb@next.com.au

Tech giants slam Napster

THE MP3 SWAPPING SITE GAINS SOME UNEXPECTED ALLIES

A broad coalition of technology and Internet companies are filing legal briefs that are bitterly critical of August's court decision against Napster, saying it could threaten the future of much of the technology industry.

The parties involved, including the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), the Digital Media Association (DiMA) and NetCoalition, are careful to say that they are not explicitly supporting either side in the high-stakes lawsuit. But each group's separate arguments go a long way to support Napster in its battle against the Recording Industry Association of America.

The CEA includes giants such as Sony Electronics, Apple Computer, Cisco Systems and hundreds of others across the industry. DiMA is composed of many of the leading online music companies, such as Listen.com and EMusic. NetCoalition is a US-based lobbying group that includes Yahoo, America Online, Amazon.com and Excite@Home, among others.

Several of the trade associations contend that federal Judge Marilyn Hall Patel misapplied copyright law that protects technologies with "substantial non-infringing uses". If her decision is used as precedent for other cases, it could threaten

Head on over to
www.napster.com if you
wish to lend support



The screenshot shows the Napster website with a navigation menu on the left including Home, Download, Speak Out, New Artists, Press Room, and Help. The main content area is titled 'Your Support for Napster Can Make a Difference' and contains several paragraphs encouraging users to support the site by running the application, contacting artists, or participating in forums. A footer at the bottom includes links for home, download, speak out, new artists, press room, and help, along with a copyright notice for 2000 Napster Inc.

development across the consumer technology sector, they say.

Patel's decision late last month sided with the record industry and said it is likely Napster was at least partly liable for massive copyright infringement on the part of its members. She ordered that the music-swapping site prevent copyrighted material from being traded via its technology which would essentially shut Napster down in its current

form. Napster was granted a stay of injunction (see Server last month) until the hearing. A court date has now been set - the trial is scheduled to commence on October 2, 2000.

The fact that a trial date has been set suggests that the appeals court has not agreed to Napster's motion to have the RIAA's injunction against it thrown out completely, which the software company's lawyers requested on 18th August. If Napster is unsuccessful in this motion the final nails may be hammered into the music swapping service's coffin this month.

MICROSOFT EXPANDS ITS NEXT-GEN CONSOLE SPECS


The leaked information entails that the X-box will have the same kind of features that Tivo and ReplayTV currently offer. These systems allow users to record like a VCR, but also to watch a show not long after it has begun. Due to Web-based TV listings such devices are even easier to set up for recording than G-Code enabled VCRs, and best of all they can be set up to do away with the commercials. As with the Tivo and ReplayTV's services, in order to use the digital VCR features Microsoft will require X-box users to subscribe to Web-based TV listings. We'll keep you posted with further developments and the official response to this leak.



K*GRIND FLIPS INTO ISP MARKET

K*Grind has stepped into the ISP market following its high-profile decision to quit the entertainment business. K*Grind has licensed its Web publishing software and cable Internet browser to Quadtel, which plans to sell it to ISPs. K*Grind's software allows content to be accessed via WAP phones, dialup Internet connections and broadband Internet connections.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH ADSL



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Broadband Access

inet's broadband solutions use cutting edge technology to deliver high-speed low-latency Internet access. Broadband is ideal for business connections that desire higher throughput, plus in the home to use multimedia technology such as streaming audio and video.

inet's cable access product is the first Cable Internet service in Western Australia. We are similarly pioneering wireless and other broadband technologies in conjunction with our carrier company, [AT&T](#).

Cable Internet Access Get set up on the Cable Network!	from \$40 per month more info >
Cityspan	from \$325 per month more info >

Permanent Internet access without wires! Available across the Perth metro area.

account add-ons

We offer a number of "add-ons" to our accounts. They allow you to upgrade your account with extra features without the need to purchase a high-end business solution. They provide the ideal way to give your small to medium organisation a professional edge.

MONTHLY SERVICE PROVIDER NEWS

Each month ISP Watch will give you important information on a particular provider. To kick it off let's give some info on a broadband access solution for our west coast brethren.

www.iinet.com.au

Perth ISP iiNet has more than doubled its user base in the past year. The influx has come with competitive dialup pricing and the rollout of cable access in Perth - a promise on which neither Telstra nor Optus have been able to deliver. iiNet also has plans to deliver ADSL using Telstra's exchanges in the near future.

iiNet's top dialup account is \$33 per month with unlimited hours. The plan includes a 'soft' 750Mb download limit, the penalty for exceeding your allotted volume: "You may experience degraded performance on your account". iiNet's cable access starts at \$40 per month for the 500Mb Cable Home package and \$100 gives you double that limit on the Cable Express plan. However there's currently no unlimited cable plan and the penalty for exceeding your limit is monetary - not a slap on the wrist as with dialup.

[illegible]Telstra ADSL @ www.telstra.com.au

Telstra has released its ADSL pricing to strong criticism, in similar circumstances to the launch of its cable Internet service. Potential users are unhappy with the restricted bandwidth and volume-based pricing Telstra has introduced.

While ADSL can theoretically provide up to 6Mbps high-speed access, Telstra has restricted home access to 512Kbps downstream and 128Kbps upstream transmissions. The \$73 per month Blast Off plan offers 256/64Kbps and a 500Mb monthly download limit. The unlimited volume plans, Freedom Standard and Deluxe, cost \$78 for 256/64Kbps and \$89 for 512/128Kbps respectively. Telstra will only make its 1.5Mbps/256Kbps high-speed service available to business customers on its Business Deluxe plan. Installation price depends on the length of your contract; a three month contract will set you back \$399 but if you commit to 18 months the price drops to \$189. And in addition, if you're not with Telstra for your long-distance calls expect to pay a \$16.50 premium on all plans.

Access Features Employment Where to Buy

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Account, Tools
Support
Business
More

More Speed
Dial
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ADSL + Broad + JETSTREAM

JetStream ADSL, the latest in high speed, high performance Internet access, is up to 25-30 Mbps faster than standard ADSL. JetStream ADSL gives you the speed you need, and just from just \$64.95 per month. It's great value for everyone.

Key Features:

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- Access on Internet connection
- Using existing telephone line
- Can send and receive email (with extra phone on the line)
- Access to broadband services (e.g. download)
- Access plan of just \$64.95 per month

If you'd like to find out more about JetStream ADSL, fill out the form below, and we'll let you know more about JetStream as soon as information becomes available.

Sign Up

Primus ADSL @ www.primus.com.au

Primus has also released pricing for its ADSL services. Primus' HomeJet and BizJet ADSL services provide either 256/64Kbps, or 1.5Mbps downstream and 256Kbps upstream. The plans cost \$69 for a 256/64Kbps service with a 300Mb monthly download limit, and \$110 for the 1.5Mbps/256Kbps connection with a 500Mb download limit. Either plan can be provided with no download limits for an additional \$5 per month, and installation - including an Alcatel ADSL modem - starts at \$295 for a three-month contract, reducing to \$187 for an 18-month contract. Like Telstra, Primus sees ADSL as a point of loyalty and charges a 10% premium for customers not preselected with the company for long distance calls.

ADSL pricing is under scrutiny by the ACCC, which has issued a call for public comment on digital line pricing. Currently Telstra's wholesale price for ADSL is \$63 for 256/64Kbps connections; the consumer watchdog believes this price should be closer to \$36 per month.



Diablo II Web Resources

IF THE GAME'S SALES ARE ANY INDICATION, THEN THESE SITES WILL BE FLOODED WITH HITS IN THE COMING MONTHS

Diablo II Realm features some really cool fan-created art (bottom)



www.blizzard.com/diablo2

Home of the Chaos Sanctuary - a consolidated source of Diablo II information and news, straight from the demon's mouth. The official nature of the information posted here makes it the most reliable, and the comprehensive nature of the site makes the Chaos Sanctuary one of the few genuinely useful official game sites in existence.



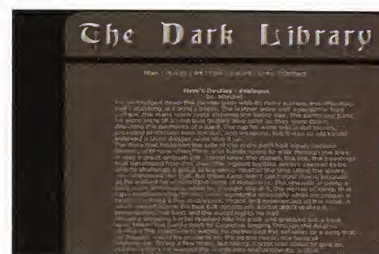
www.diabloii.net

Clearly the best unofficial Diablo II site, Diablolll.net outshines even the likes of the Chaos Sanctuary by virtue of the intimidating volume of information it presents. Page upon page of timely advice is accompanied by intriguing anecdotes that enhance the player's understanding of the subject matter and serve to entertain at the same time. The various forums are an invaluable source of hints and tips, and the trading forum is perfect for those looking to offload some particularly valuable unique items. There's even an auction forum allowing subscribers to buy and sell exceptionally rare weapons and suits of armour. Be sure to check out the Hardcore Graveyard, where you can read the tales of woe of unfortunate souls who spent countless hours developing their characters, only to lose them at the hands of meddling siblings and chronic lag. Some accounts are quite sad, but more than a few are awfully amusing.



guildtimes.diabloii.net

Sister site to the incredible Diablo II.net, the Guild Times is the premier Diablo II guild resource. Packed with anything and everything guild related, this is the site to go to if you are looking to join a guild, would like to promote your own guild, or wish to forge alliances with (or declare war on) other guilds. The forums make recruiting new members or contacting existing ones a pretty straightforward affair, and the guild site reviews are particularly informative. This is also the best place for those bearing a grudge against spineless player killers to commission one of the dozens of bounty hunting clans that frequent the message boards.



tdl.diabloii.net

The other sister site of Diablolll.net, The Dark Library is chock full of well-written fan fiction regaling the visitor with the tales of evil, honour and valour. Find solace in the tales of valiant warriors and sleep soundly at night, safe in the knowledge that those strong of body and pure of heart are continuing to keep the minions of the Lord of Darkness at bay.



www.d2realm.com

Another excellent site, the Diablo II Realm offers the latest news and some useful downloadable utilities. However, the greatest attraction of the Diablo II Realm is its fantastic Fan Art Gallery. Depicting dozens of sumptuous, fan-created drawings, renders and collages, the gallery showcases the works of some truly talented individuals.



stonewolves.freesevers.com/index.html

The Stone Wolves are one of the few Australian Diablo II clans. Although they don't have a large number of members, all their members are extremely active players. As such, the Stone Wolves are a very close-knit clan of intrepid adventurers who are only too happy to welcome similarly dedicated players into their pack.





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THE INTERNET

ONLINE

www.winamp.com
The world's most downloaded Mp3 player



www.napster.com
What the fuss is all about...



www.mp3.com
A huge collection of Mp3 related news and resources



www.scour.net
The scour client is a major competitor to Napster, but also works with other media besides Mp3



Gnutella.wego.com
Download the Gnutella client



www.imesh.com
A client very similar to Gnutella



Digital Audio

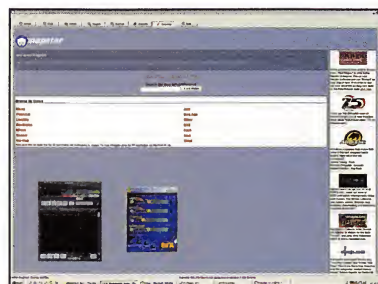
AFTER STEALING HIS MUSIC, LARS ULRICH HAS A HITMAN ON HUGH NORTON-SMITH...

Unlike the introduction of the tape, CD or MiniDisc, the Mp3 phenomenon can claim a genuine grass-roots heritage. Originally developed by the Fraunhofer Institute in late 1997, Mp3 has already had a genuinely revolutionary impact.

Mp3, which stands for Mpeg-1 Audio Layer 3, is a compression system for music. Basically, the Mp3 format helps reduce the amount of bytes in a track, without hurting the sound quality. How? By removing extraneous audio data and superfluous information from the original WAV file. More specifically, Mp3 eliminates redundant audio frequencies that cannot be heard by the human ear.

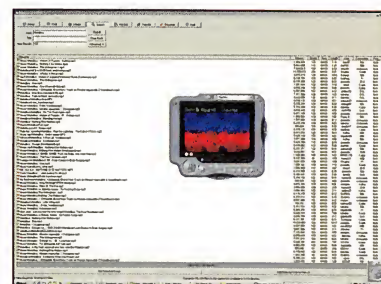
The ultimate aim of Mp3 is to reduce a CD to around a 10th of its original size with minimal loss in sound quality. With Mp3, a 40Mb .WAV or CD file can be squashed into a tiny 4Mb of space. The reduced size of Mp3 files makes their distribution over the Internet very feasible. Even dial-up users can download entire songs in a matter of minutes or an entire album in a couple of hours.

With the ever expanding size of today's hard drives, Mp3 makes it quite possible to store thousands of Mp3 files on your computer. And by rigging up a hefty pair of speakers to your soundcard, you can convert your PC into a formidable hi-fi system.



Mp3 files can be played through the bundled Windows Media Player or a specialist program like Winamp or Sonique. And, unlike other media formats, Mp3 uses very few system resources during playback. There are competing formats, yet none have achieved the recognition of Mp3.

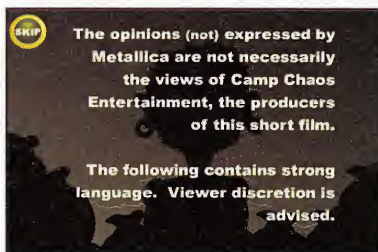
Windows Media Audio (WMA) is a format developed by Microsoft, which promises to beat Mp3 at its own game. Developed recently, WMA has a far superior method of compression than Mp3 - music can be compressed to a much smaller size, while retaining the same music quality. WMA has also garnered the favour of industry types, as it implements a rudimentary copyright verification mechanism. However, it remains to be seen if a proprietary format like WMA will catch on, particularly considering the established fanbase and industry acceptance of the Mp3 standard.



The Digital Revolution

Much to the chagrin of the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America), the Mp3 file format has become hugely popular. All their belated attempts to stamp out the burgeoning Mp3 movement have only served to publicise the phenomenon. For instance, the RIAA has made a huge effort to shutdown Napster and Mp3.com, both of which offer commercial music for download. Joining the fracas are Dr. Dre and Metallica, who - to the disappointment of their fans - have slapped multi-million dollar lawsuits against Napster. Thanks to daily media coverage of the Napster vs. Metallica legal wrangling, just about everyone knows that Napster allows for easy trading of copyrighted music.

Until Napster arrived, searching for Mp3 files online was a nightmare. Who else but the most fanatical music fans had the patience to sift through dozens of broken



UNDERGROUND



links, mediocre ftp search engines and IRC (Internet Relay Chat) for a single track?

Napster, which went online mid-1999, changed all this. Within minutes of installing the Napster client-server, users can happily download as much as their patience and ISP account allows. No Mp3 files are stored on the Napster-owned servers. Rather, the Napster software acts as a search engine, and connects you directly to the PC from which you are downloading.

Like most of these ideas, Napster was the brainchild of a college student with a high-speed connection, too much time and a fascination with leading edge computing

technology. Shawn Fanning developed the original Napster application and service in January 1999 while a freshman at Northeastern University, and operated the first Napster server from his bedroom. Fanning combined the practicality of an Mp3 search engine with the community features of IRC. The concept is simple: by sharing your music files to the Internet you can, in turn, have access to the wealth of music stored by other users. At any one time, Napster gives access to terabytes of downloadable music, although the bulk of this is largely repeated material.

Nutty Gnutella

Gnutella is another popular peer-to-peer file-sharing program. Created by Justin Frankel, the rogue programmer responsible for Nullsoft and Winamp, Gnutella has caused a huge stir. Within hours of its open-source release, the Gnutella client was removed from the Nullsoft website as an 'unauthorised project'. Frankel's company Nullsoft is fully

owned by AOL-TimeWarner, an International conglomerate with interests in preserving the media status quo. Not surprisingly, Gnutella's completely decentralised file-sharing capabilities were viewed as a threat to their media empire.

One of the chief vulnerabilities of a Napster-like system is its reliance on large company-maintained servers. Gnutella eliminates this by using a completely distributed method of file searching. What's particularly controversial is that Gnutella allows the end user to share any type of file. While Mp3 files are unquestionably the most frequently distributed files on the system, Gnutella is also used for circulating DivX movies, pirated software and 'exotic' pictures. It's a system guaranteed to give any copyright lawyer cold sweats.

Digital audio is the future. The music industry can either maximise the beneficial potential of this innovative technology or lose their grip altogether. It's an exciting time.

MP3

IS MP3 ILLEGAL?

Mp3 is merely an audio compression standard, so it is not illegal. Like many technologies, it can be implemented in both legal and illegal applications - some may use it for distributing unlicensed music material, while other may make use the technology for completely legitimate uses.



Dr Dre and Lars:
Apparently, big fans of
the Napster community



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As Australia's leading online marketplace, eBay has thousands of buyers, making it the best place for you to sell your laptop. Simply log on to ebay.com.au



ebay.COM.AU

Australia's leading online marketplace.



THE INTERNET UNDERGROUND

The Emulation Scene

LIKE MOST OLD-SCHOOL GAMERS, YOU PROBABLY HAVE FOND MEMORIES OF BEATING M.BISON IN STREET FIGHTER II, BLOWING UP GEOMETRIC TANKS IN BATTLEZONE AND SMASHING THROUGH THAT LAST BLOCK ON LEVEL 61 OF ARKANOID. OR YOU MAY REMEMBER OPERATION WOLF, DEFENDER AND TEMPEST WITH MISTY EYES. IF YOU'VE GOT A HANKERING FOR OLD SCHOOL GAMES, EMULATION ON YOUR PC IS THE ONLY SOLUTION. BUT, BEFORE YOU TRY AND JAM AN OLD ATARI 2600 CARTRIDGE INTO YOUR FLOPPY DISK DRIVE, LET **HUGH NORTON-SMITH** EXPLAIN...



From the likes of Mario Kart and Tekken 3, even the most advanced systems can be emulated



ONLINE

www.swapoo.com
ROM Search Engine

Swapool!

www.ultrahle.com
UltraHLE HomePage

www.mame.net
MAME Home Page

www.zophar.net
Zophar's Domain

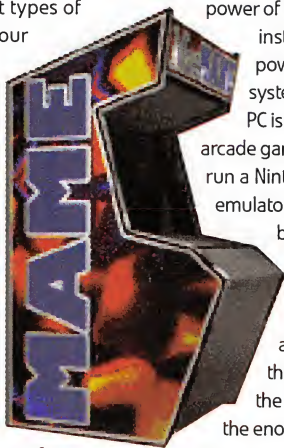
www.gnutella.org
gnutella

Emulators got their name because they force your computer to emulate (obviously) different types of hardware. An emulator on your system allows your PC to imitate the original system, and thus play games that were intended for the original system. Emulation doesn't involve rewriting old games to work on your computer; rather, it makes your computer play the actual code from the original game. Thanks to the vast number of emulators available, a Windows PC can emulate almost every type of computer platform, ranging from ancient arcade boards to the Macintosh and advanced console systems. In fact, there is even an emulator available for the infamous TI Speak and Spell!

Unfortunately, emulators aren't always perfect. They are enormously complex pieces of software, and most emulators cannot completely replicate the abilities of the original system. With some emulators, the imperfection may be relatively minor, including small graphical or sound glitches. Other emulators may have difficulties playing certain games or, more seriously, may lack important features such as sound.

Read Only Mame

Emulation is made feasible through the brute power of modern PCs. A PIII-600, for instance, is infinitely more powerful than an Atari 2600 system. Of course, a cutting-edge PC isn't required for emulating old arcade games. However, if you intend to run a Nintendo 64 or PlayStation emulator at a decent framerate, a beefy rig is a must - The Beast, anyone? Generally, the newer the emulated system, the harder it is to emulate. There are many reasons for this, but the most principal limitations are the lack of processor power and the enormous complexity of modern microprocessor design.



Shinobi and Arkanoid on MAME

EXCELLENT EMULATORS

Arcade: MAME

The touchstone upon which all other emulators are measured and found wanting, MAME is able to emulate countless different arcade games, and over 1,000 different arcade boards.

MAME, the Multi Arcade Machine Emulator is an open-sourced project, whose stated goal is "to preserve historical games from oblivion." Most importantly, MAME can play Street Fighter II: Championship Edition... (And Mr Do! - Harry).

Nintendo64: UltraHLE

Although there are now numerous Nintendo 64 emulators, Ultra High Level Emulator was the first to run commercial games properly. It even runs Goldeneye. Sadly, UltraHLE requires a 3dfx card, although future updates are expected to use OpenGL. Other N64 Emulators worth checking out include NEmu and Corn.



PlayStation: Bleem!

Currently available for both the PC and Sega Dreamcast, Bleem is an enormously popular



commercial PlayStation emulator. If you have a Direct3D compatible 3D videocard, Bleem! can enhance your old PlayStation games - instead of the usual 320x200 PlayStation

resolution, games can be run at a

full 640x480 with better texturing and richer detail. Worth checking out, particularly if you have a decent library of PlayStation titles.

NeoGeo: NeoRage

The best NeoGeo emulator out there, Neo Rage lets you enjoy all of the arcade classics at full speed on any Pentium 166 PC. Also includes extensive joystick support, enhanced resolutions and near-100% compatibility. A must have, especially for fans of archaic 2D fighters.



Super Nintendo: Zsnes

Most will agree that the SNES was the seminal 16-bit console, with epic games like Super

Mario World, Final Fantasy, the immortal Super Street Fighter II Turbo and StarFox. Zsnes, the foremost SNES emulator, can play most games and is even able to emulate the cartridge-based SuperFX chipset.

Sega Megadrive: GeneCST

GeneCST is the first 68k emulator that runs almost all Megadrive/Genesis games flawlessly. Genem is also worth considering.



NES: NESTicle

Despite the unattractive name, NESTicle is the most capable NES emulator available. Although it uses DOS, a Windows 'frontend' is available. There are a huge variety of ROMs available for the NES, making NESTicle one of the most popular emulators.

Atari 2600: Stella

The Atari 2600 Video Computer System, introduced in 1977, was the most popular home videogame system of the early 1980s. Stella, an open-source multi-platform VCS emulator, allows you to enjoy all of the hundreds of Atari games available. Excellent compatibility.



Streetfighter 2: Champion Edition and Ghosts 'n Goblins



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THE INTERNET UNDERGROUND

ONLINE

<http://www.divx-digest.com>
The Bible of DivX Information. News, trailers, step-by-step guides and many utilities. The page includes a link to FlaskMpeg.



<http://divx.ctw.cc/>
Official DivX homepage. Includes PC, Mac and BeOS codecs.

<http://www.projectmayo.com>
The heir to DivX: from the original team who hacked the DivX codecs, ProjectMayo will be completely free of Microsoft-owned code. The designers claim that it will feature a significantly faster decode engine.



<http://www.fm4.org/main.html>
FreeMpeg4 provides you with info about current DivX releases.



<http://www.3ivx.com>
Another codec showing some promise.



DivX ;-) and Mpeg-4: The Future of Digital Video

HUGH NORTON-SMITH INVESTIGATES THE RAPIDLY SPREADING NEW VIDEO CODEC

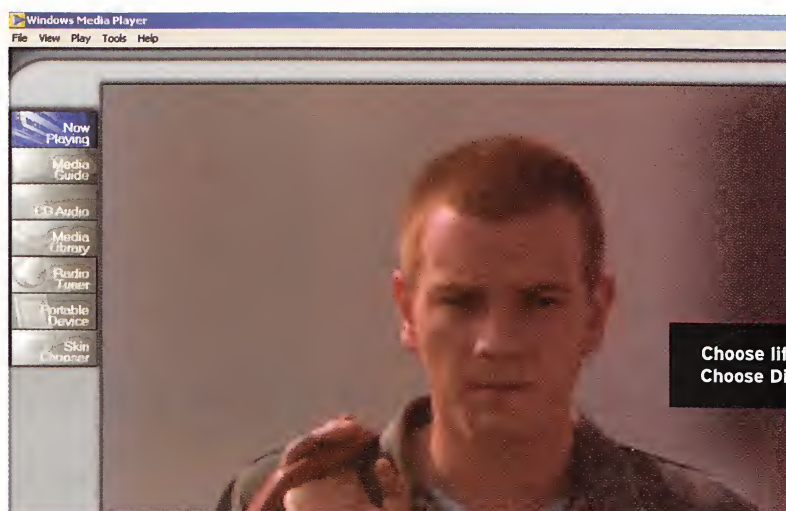
The battle over digital rights is welling up on the Internet. With the commotion over Mp3s and Napster gaining widespread media coverage, a more insidious form of media piracy is about to hit the mainstream. A new video technology is floating through the computer underground that holds the promise of doing for movies what Mp3 has done for digital music - and the scene is flourishing. Anyone with a high-speed connection, a relatively speedy PC and the hacked DivX codec can now download almost any recently release movie in a matter of hours. It has Hollywood running for cover.

Background notes

While perennially popular in Asia (and Haymarket), Video CDs also have a hardcore enthusiast following on the Internet. For some time now, devotees of the Video CD scene have been able to download entire films from the Internet, albeit at reduced picture quality. The main problem, however, is that Video CDs look terrible. The two formats used (generally ASF and MPEG) are marred by horrendous pixellation, sub-standard framerates and lo-fi audio. With the proliferation of DVD, the poor quality of these formats became unacceptable. Enter DivX.

DivX - which has no connection to the defunct DivX 'self-destructing' DVD format promoted by the Circuit City retail chain - is the work of '133t hAx0rs' who go by the pseudonyms "MaxMorice" and "Gej". DivX uses a modified version of Microsoft's Mpeg-4 Version 3 implementation. Essentially, DivX uses the Mpeg-4 method of compressing a video stream used in conjunction with Mp3 audio. This allows for high quality video and audio, allowing the compression of entire films with minimal picture degradation. Using the advanced features of DivX, most films can be stored on a single CD, with picture quality comparable to DVD. (The screenshots really don't do it justice - DivX must be seen to be believed.)

To play DivX files, obtaining the DivX codec is necessary. This will allow Microsoft Windows Media Player 7.0 to read the encoded file. Playback at full framerate requires a relatively fast processor (at least 400MHz).



Home cinema

Using the DivX codec and FlaskMpeg, anyone with a DVD drive can create high quality videos on their home PC. The process is relatively simple, although there is a definite art to maximising picture quality whilst minimising the size. FlaskMpeg, a freeware ripper/encoder readily available on numerous underground websites, uses the DecSS algorithm to rip the raw DVD file to disk. FlaskMpeg then proceeds to transform this .vob file into a DivX-compatible .avi file. The DVD ripping process generally takes about three hours, while encoding the ripped file to the DivX format can take up to an entire day. Obviously, this depends on the speed of the computer. A decent speed DVD-ROM and a fast processor are essential. If under 700Mb, the resulting .avi file can then be burnt and stored on CD.

The Future?

At the moment, the DivX scene is much like the Mp3 scene in late 1997: nascent, yet expanding - not to mention a legal minefield just waiting to explode. Right now, however, DivX remains largely for the tech-geeks on fat Internet pipes. Indeed, the process of copying (or 'ripping') a movie from DVD is still complicated, and there are no consumer-friendly programs to create DivX files as yet.

It is also worth noting, however, that the Mp3 scene was just as complicated back in 1997, until more user-friendly programs like WinAmp started to appear on the market. If you think that Napster and Mp3 are causing a fuss, then wait another six months.

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Coming soon...



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SPOONMAN'S LAN DIARY

BLAM - REDLANDS COMPUTER GAMING ASSOCIATION

Location: Alexandra Hills (Brisbane)

Dates: 7/10/2000

Players: 40

Cost: \$8

Web: www.rcga.net

Eight dollars is certainly not bad value for a LAN, even if it is only ten hours. Like most LAN events you bring your own PC, plug it in and away you go. Food and drink can be bought at reasonable prices so a good value day of fun can be almost guaranteed.

LGA

Location: Gold Coast

Dates: 15/10/2000

Players: TBA

Cost: \$7 - \$17

Web: www.daikyo.com.au/lga

For anyone living in the Gold Coast looking for a very structured event this could be for you. They run several serious competitions for all major FPS games and won't allow file sharing after the first two hours to ensure a very fast network. The venue has automatic locking doors so once you're in, you're in, they do however open for dinner where you can get a pizza for \$6 or other assorted snackage.

FRAGFEST

Location: French's Forest

Dates: 3/11/2000 - 5/11/2000

Players: TBA

Cost: FREE

Web: www.fragfest.com.au

Amazingly enough this party runs for three days and still will not cost you a cent. This could only be described as the deal of the century. FragFest runs every two months as well, so if you miss one check back on their website and go to the next. They will be selling food at the event, so you won't have to pack lunches (although you can if you like) which will be at usual prices. Whatever the price though, then event is free, you can't go wrong.

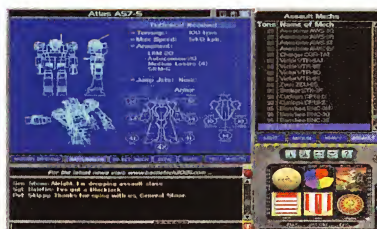
GOT A PARTY?

There are many, many parties each month, so if you'd like to draw some special attention to yours then contact spoonman@hunterlink.net.au with the details. Please try and give two months' notice.

For submissions, email spoonman@next.com.au

Battletech 3025

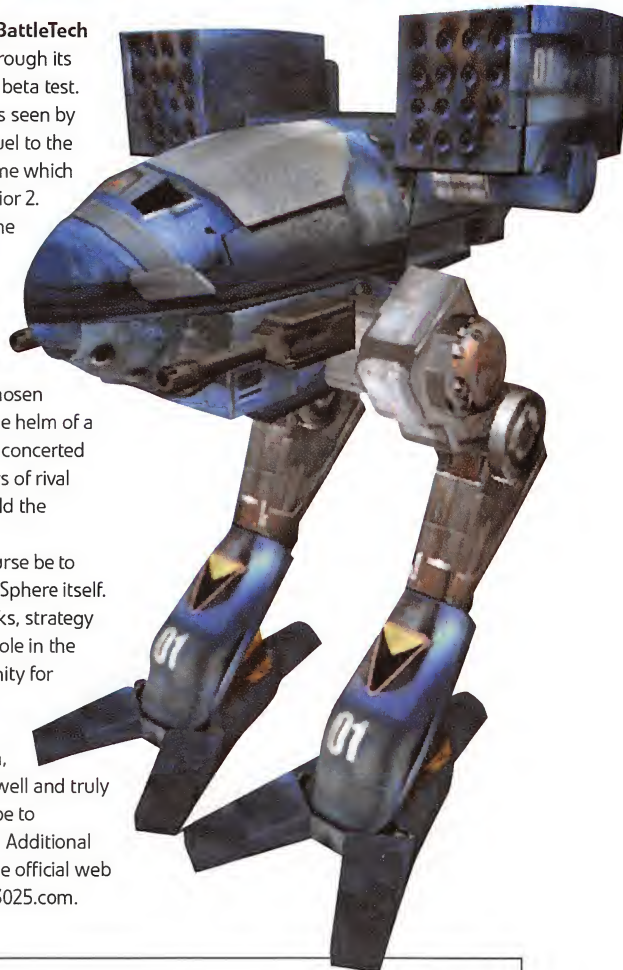
THE ROBOTS GO ONLINE...



Kesmai Corporation's BattleTech

3025 will soon be put through its paces in a 10,000 player closed beta test. The massively multiplayer title is seen by many as a vastly improved sequel to the aging BattleTech: Solaris - a game which predates Activision's MechWarrior 2. BattleTech 3025 will hybridise the action and strategy genres, allowing more than 50,000 players to join one of five Inner Sphere Houses: Davion, Kurita, Liao, Marik or Steiner. As a representative of one of their chosen House, the player will fight at the helm of a hulking BattleMech as part of a concerted effort to subjugate the members of rival Houses. Victory in battle will yield the territory of the vanquished.

The ultimate goal will of course be to dominate - if not rule - the Inner Sphere itself. As the player moves up the ranks, strategy and politics will play a greater role in the proceedings, with the opportunity for betrayal sure to present itself. BattleTech 3025 was originally scheduled for a Q3 2000 launch, but delays have seen this date well and truly surpassed. As such, Kesmai hope to complete the game by Q1 2001. Additional information can be found on the official web site located at www.battletech3025.com.



Dudes Arcade

A LAN RACING EVENT THAT MEANS BUSINESS

The dudes are here! Dudes Arcade is a wicked new business running out of a house in downtown Surry Hills. When you first step through the door, you're immediately assaulted by rows of PCs lining the walls, all with the one intent: to drain the life-blood from any virtual motorists who happen to get caught in their web. You'll understand what I mean after your first visit, and you happen to glance at the clock and realise that six hours have already passed!

That's right, the eloquently named "Dudes Arcade" is the latest offering in the fast growing world of LAN-tertainment. Let's face it, anyone who's ever attended the average LAN-day is fully aware of the hassle/headache in lugging that bloody PC half-way round the world. Additionally, if you're lucky enough to own a 21" piece of gaming luxury, you'll be unlucky enough to score yourself a hernia trying to move the bastard. Well, with Dudes Arcade, you can forget all that crap, 'cause the machines are rearing and ready to go.



Some of the games on offer include: Grand Prix 3, Need For Speed: High Stakes, NFS 2: Special Edition, Carmageddon 1&2 and Rally Masters. The systems are all PIII-667MHz, Voodoo3/3000 AGP graphics, with 17" & 19" monitors. Oh yeah! And to top it all off, you get all this LAN-mania madness for only 8 bucks an

hour, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Furthermore, if you're one of the rare few whom can surpass the speed of the "Dr." (Jim) behind the wheel, then your stay at the Dudes Arcade is on the house!

Edward Fox

home.iprimus.com.au/dudes

For bookings, phone Jim on (02) 93182695 or (02) 96986710.

Majestic

EA.COM'S INAUGURAL GAME UNVEILED

At an Electronic Gaming Summit in California, Electronic Arts finally unveiled its secret online project. Majesty, a massively multiplayer mystery suspense thriller set in the present, will make its debut on the EA.com gaming portal. Although very little is known about the game itself, EA President and COO, John Riccitello, stated that "Majestic will be the first PC game I've seen that will fax or phone you. It will actively interact with the player at unprecedented levels". Majesty is expected to launch in late 2001, following the estimated Xmas 2000 launch of the EA.com portal.



Ultima Online 2:
another EA.com title



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PCPP ROUNDTABLE GAME VIOLENCE



THE FIRST IN A NEW SERIES OF DEBATES KICKS OFF
WITH A LOOK AT A MOST CONTENTIOUS ISSUE

Violence in the media has been an issue for longer than any of us can remember. The subject has been with society since before computer games, but in the last ten years, "games as the violence pariah" has been the popular cry of conservatives everywhere. We are astonished at how the issue is presented so simplistically both in and outside the industry: either games are the scourge of society or completely innocent, harmless fun.

To fill in some of the grey areas and exorcise some personal demons, we brought together some of the great minds in the PC PowerPlay family: Agata Budinska, John Dewhurst, Ed Fox, Christian Read, Brett Robinson, March Stepnik, Mike Wilcox and David Wildgoose.

FIRST REACTIONS

MARCH: I think the issue has been blown out of proportion. It has been reduced to accusations that violent games like Quake have caused events like Columbine. Then you get people in the games industry saying, "No they don't", in response to these accusations and that's as far as it gets. There's no intelligent debate or discussion about violence in games having

ANY effect whatsoever on people. I get frustrated with that.

DAVID: You automatically think of the sensationalist, tabloid reporting of it, that these games are training our kids to become killers.

AGATA: I cringe and think, "Oh, they're looking for that old excuse again." People are too afraid to take responsibility for raising their children.

BRETT: More than anything the issue highlights the inadequacy of our legal system in dealing with classification of violent games. Violent games have certainly become a societal scapegoat.

ED: If you are going to design a game with a violent element then you will do that but games aren't designed to BE violent. Games are designed around a theme, not necessarily violence.

CHRISTIAN: Sure. My opinion of violence is this:



Yes, video games are violent. Why? Because people like it. We don't need to hide from it, just ACCEPT it. As far as a causal link between violence on TV, games, movies, comic books and ANYTHING in real life, I completely disagree. **MARCH:** But the issue is whether it has an affect on people's behaviour...

ED: Well, I've played a lot of violent games in my gaming career and never felt the urge to go out and shoot a bunch of my schoolmates. Having said that, I've played a heck of a lot of racing games and that must have had some affect on me because I plan to race next year. So I don't know...

CHRISTIAN: Not such a good argument then... (general laughter)

ED: I think gaming is something aligned with the youth of the world and people worry about young, impressionable minds.

JOHN: So is the stigma attached to violence in gaming justified at all?

ED: I couldn't say it was black and white but on the whole, no it's not.

CHRISTIAN: Yeah, there's terrible violence in gaming, you don't turn on your television and watch Friends to see Monica get a chaingun and blow Chandler's face off...

ED: Though you wish sometimes!

CHRISTIAN: ...your kids generally can't consume that sort of horrible violence.

AGATA: By the same token, with TV there's violence on the news and in movies, that's readily available.



CHRISTIAN: I think it's contextual. You put on a game and you generally know that you're going to get a concentrated dose of ludicrous violence if you buy a ludicrously violent game.

MARCH: Sure, but we're seeing this from an adult perspective - what about younger people who don't necessarily have the faculties to discern that, they're more impressionable.

DAVID: That's the tabloid media perception, that only kids who play violent games can be violent and dangerous.

GAMING NATURE

JOHN: Despite the stigma of violence being a bad thing, what makes violence such a popular element of these games?

MIKE: Because you can live out a fantasy, like in Half Life.

ED: Exactly, you can participate in things that you would never normally be able to do without being thrown in gaol.

DAVID: But violence isn't why Half-Life is such a good game...

ED: No.

DAVID: Otherwise, Kingpin or Soldier of Fortune would be even better.



MARCH: For me the question is more to what effect is violence used? Is it used as filler, is it the crux of the game, is that why people play it?

DAVID: Firing guns is a really easy thing for programmers to simulate, much easier than writing convincing dialogue.

ED: But in Deus Ex... if they decided not to have anyone fire a gun, it wouldn't be the same game - it'd be Thief... (laughs)

DAVID: You can do the first mission of Deus Ex without firing a gun.

ED: But you have to fire some type of weapon.

DAVID: You can use a baton.

MARCH: But that's still violent.

JOHN: It took a long time for a different version of the firstperson game to come along, like Thief.

It's a different game in terms of violence.



AGATA: The aim of the game is not to kill anyone.

MARCH: Violence has only recently been used as an effective tool in a game. It's always been a case of shooting shit for the sake of it - it's the thrill, whereas now I think the industry is beginning to mature a bit.

CHRISTIAN: Torment is an example of a different kind of game.

MARCH: It's refreshing to not have to use violence.

JOHN: Yeah, if you listen to the Black Isle guys, the most rewarding character in Torment is one that's high in charisma, wisdom or intelligence. It's heavily weighted to a narrative experience rather than an action one.

DAVID: But in Torment, when you're having those battles with say Ravel, it just wouldn't have been the same if it was through dialogue - if you didn't have to face those hordes of creatures along the way and survive.

CHRISTIAN: But that's not the point, it's a very rare game that has an overall philosophical underpinning and it develops thematic structures.

DAVID: I thought they complemented each other.

CHRISTIAN: And it's cool to beat the hell out of a Trigit.

THE MORALITY OF SLAYING

JOHN: It's easier to make a straight-up shooter than other games. Is that why violence is so prevalent in gaming?

DAVID: If you go back to the very first games, they're all about shooting things. Look at Space Invaders.

JOHN: I think it's also apart of the market, they want violence.

ED: It sells.



DAVID: Well, what is violence? Is it just shooting stuff? Is Doom violent? It's so abstract.

MARCH: What about Quake III?

DAVID: I think action is a better word for it than violence since it's so cartoony.

BRETT: It's far more focussed on reflexes and manual dexterity than on inflicting violence on others

JOHN: Well, is context of violence important then?

CHRISTIAN: I think that basically context is the only thing that gives you an excuse. Take Soldier of Fortune. Personally I am far more offended by Soldier of Fortune, which is basically this right-wing hideous gun nut game...

ED: A redneck rampage.

CHRISTIAN: ...Kill anything that's not white is basically the subtext of the game. Compare that to Quake, where you're shooting ludicrous monsters, or Half-Life or anything like that.

DAVID: With Soldier of Fortune, I think the whole racist thing is far more offensive than the fact that you can shoot someone in the stomach and see their entrails.



JOHN: Sure the responsibility lies with parents but shouldn't we be legislating...

DAVID: Parents need classification so that they CAN be responsible.

MIKE: It's like Jimmy and Joey dragging their Mum to the shop saying, "We want this" and mum says, "Looks okay to me" but she has no idea what the content is.

AGATA: I think parents should take the time to find out what the contents of a game are.

EFFECTS

MARCH: Despite the media, isn't violence in games something we should be concerned about?

CHRISTIAN: There's not a lot of fire in the argument. If you say that some child killed another and was playing Frogger at the time...

MARCH: But now we know that the Sun doesn't revolve around the Earth...

JOHN: Is it a general consensus here that violence has no effect on gamers?

MARCH: I think it does.

DAVID: You can't say that it has no effect. We receive so much information everyday and everything has



CHRISTIAN: It's that casual brutality that makes me take a step back.

JOHN: Is that an issue in the media and for gamers in general? Is context important?

CHRISTIAN: As soon as it starts cutting close to social issues, that's when you take notice of the violence.

CLASSIFICATION

JOHN: Is that a worry when it comes to children who aren't as socially aware of what is acceptable? Because something might not be violent but be highly offensive in a moral sense.

CHRISTIAN: Very true. I think it's up to society to decide

AS SOON AS IT STARTS CUTTING CLOSE TO SOCIAL ISSUES, THAT'S WHEN YOU TAKE NOTICE OF THE VIOLENCE...

what kids see, but I don't want adult viewing matter in a game taken away from me because it might upset a ten year old. If a parent doesn't want a ten year old to see this, turn off the computer. If a parent doesn't want their child to read something, take the book away. Don't punish me because of this moray.

JOHN: Material that is appropriate for you or me is not necessarily appropriate for a ten year old.

MARCH: Why isn't it appropriate for a ten year old?

CHRISTIAN: That's opening up a big can of worms.

JOHN: Well, why do we have PG films, why do we have M films - that's taken for granted.

AGATA: But does anyone actually follow them?

MARCH: I don't think classification's that effective really.

DAVID: MA 15+ for games is not a restricted category anyway, it's just advisory.

JOHN: Whereas R would be enforceable.

CHRISTIAN: How many R rated games are there?

DAVID: None, it's not a classification.

AGATA: I think it should be up to the individual. If it's to do with a child, it should be up to the parent because classification is useless when it comes to violence.



an effect. However it's a difficult thing to gauge what kind of effect.

CHRISTIAN: You can't pick a clear behavioural link. Monkey see, monkey doesn't do. It doesn't work like that.

JOHN: So, has anyone been offended by the violence in games?

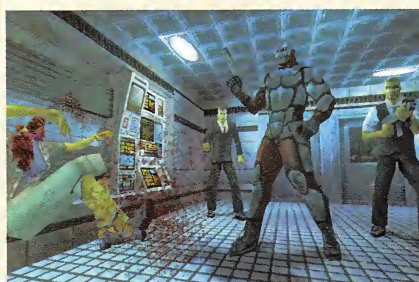
CHRISTIAN: I wouldn't say offended.

ED: Turned off is better. Probably Kingpin. The platform of that game is: "I am extremely violent, buy me."

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

VERDICT: GUILTY

The combination of dubious morals and extreme violence make this a worry in anyone's book.



KINGPIN

VERDICT: GUILTY

Carefree gun-slinging in a hip setting is a volatile mix.



THIEF

VERDICT: NOT GUILTY

The unique focus on stealth with a well defined narrative balances out the violence.





DAVID: I've stopped playing a game because it was too violent - Soldier of Fortune. I think that's the key point, comparing games to films and TV, the very nature of games is the interactivity. It has more of an effect because you are in control, but after a while you say: "No, I don't want to fire the gun."

JOHN: We talk about kids but aren't there enough gaming adults with sense in their heads to justify an R classification for games like Soldier of Fortune?

CHRISTIAN: Just remember that classification really messes with creative content...

DAVID: Soldier of Fortune wouldn't get made if there was an R classification. There would be so few sales, it wouldn't be commercially viable.

JOHN: So it's an industry thing.

MARCH: What sort of message are we getting out there? That we use violence to get somewhere?

BRETT: It appeals to that basic human desire to be the best, to rule.

MARCH: But what sort of an ideal is that.

JOHN: But that's games, isn't it?

MARCH: Is there a common denominator here that we can all agree on?

JOHN: I don't think so. I think a lot of opinions are quite different.

AGATA: But everyone plays different games too, so what we'd like to see in games is very different.

JOHN: Alright, we'll leave it there. Thanks everyone.

CONCLUSION

The range of the debaters' opinions, and the subtle differences between them, make it clear that this is no simple issue. Many fear the disappearance of their favourite action titles; others fear the effects on younger minds. We are still at the very beginning of understanding and effectively legislating for violence in games. It will be a number of years before the creativity of games developers is not in danger while adult material remains out of the hands of children. More open and objective discussion is needed between industry and government to achieve these essential goals.

DOOM

VERDICT: MISTRIAL

This classic of the genre is full to the back teeth with gruesome deaths - but it's obviously fantasy.



QUAKE III

VERDICT: NOT GUILTY

This action game is more a sport than anything else. More light-hearted than gruesome.



HALF LIFE

VERDICT: NOT GUILTY

Made use of terrifying aliens and a scary plot. Not particularly gory despite the vast arsenal.



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biggest RPGs ever."

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Wizards & Warriors™

Obi Wan

JOHN DEWHURST IS JIMMY SMITS' BODY DOUBLE IN EPISODE TWO. SO, WHEN IT CAME TO DIGGING UP THE DIRT ON LUCASARTS' JEDI KNIGHT SEQUEL, HE WAS THE ONLY MAN FOR THE JOB.



DETAILS

GENRE

Thirdperson Jedi
Action

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

LucasArts

PUBLISHER

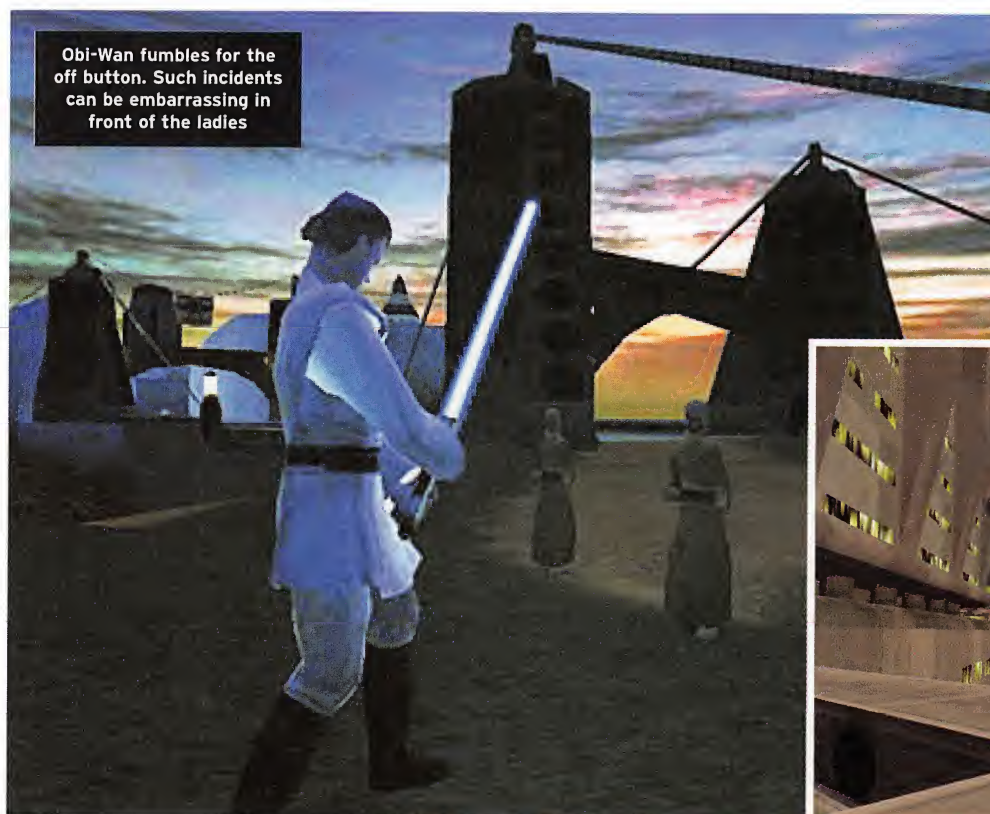
LucasArts

DUE

December

URL

www.lucasarts.com



Obi-Wan fumbles for the off button. Such incidents can be embarrassing in front of the ladies



O bi-Wan Kenobi. We have known him as a Jedi Master and a Padawan. Remembered fondly as the Jedi who sacrificed himself for Luke Skywalker's escape from the Death Star and a good-natured tag-along to Qui-Gon Jinn. An important figure? You betcha. At this stage in the first trilogy, Obi-Wan is the most exciting character in the minds of Star Wars fans and certainly the most bankable for developers. Obi-Wan is a big title, make no mistake about it - and Lucas is pulling out all the stops.

This is an important game in the LucasArts Star Wars franchise. Touted as the sequel to Jedi Knight, which is only just in living memory (*John is four years old - Ed*), it has interest from the older Star Wars fans. Being set in and around the events of The Phantom Menace, the game also has the young bloods baying. On another level, it's the first LucasArts game based around the new trilogy that wasn't rushed out the door upon release of Episode One (read cash-in). If LucasArts is able to deliver again what so



You just know that any moment now, enemy snipers will appear from those doorways...

many gamers loved in their games of the 90s, then Obi-Wan will be the first sign.

Keep the faith

LucasArts is at pains to make it clear that Obi-Wan is definitely *not* like The Phantom Menace - which was a game version of the movie. According to Production Manager, **Reeve Thompson**, "The storyline of the movie acts as an outline for the game. That is, it takes place during the same time period as the film. The game provides a very different experience for the player. They will become involved with new adventures, learn more about the Obi-Wan character (one of the most central heroes in the Star Wars series) and grow with the character from Padawan learner to Jedi Knight."

The missions in the game follow the basic story and at times let you take part in major events: you must to find a way off the Federation battlecruiser at the beginning and reach Naboo to help the princess. There are other missions that take place "between" events in the movie. This will give a clearer view of Obi-Wan and arguably some insights into his character. Your journey through the

catacombs up to the royal palace at Theed is an entire level, while in the movie this journey was implied. Other missions in Obi-Wan include sneaking through a battle droid camp in the swamps on Naboo, battling Sith agents in the streets of Coruscant and of course a showdown with Darth Maul for a finale!

Thompson states: "We've had some license to create new story elements in Obi-Wan, and while the game does remain faithful to the movie plot, I think people will feel like they are getting a new experience when they play the game. The game focuses entirely on Obi-Wan and provides the player with an expanded insight into his thoughts and experiences on the events of the film. Since he wasn't the main character in the film and he wasn't on screen most of the time, we were able to take artistic license with the story to keep it fresh and interesting while adding a variety of new elements (additional new quests, new characters, new enemies, etc.)."

Putting it in perspective

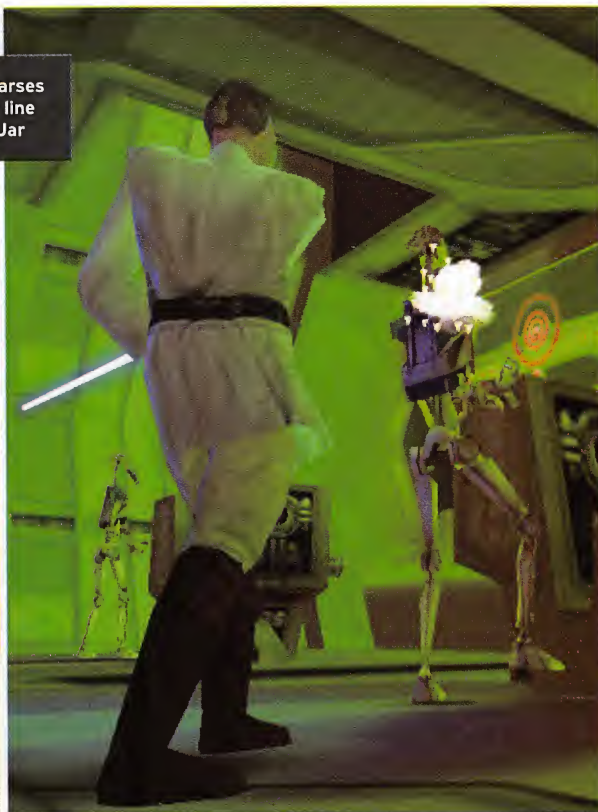
While in previous Dark Forces games, the player had an opportunity to choose a

UBIQUITOUS FORCE

Rather than using a selection of preset keys to activate your force powers in Obi-Wan, they are instead accessed via a single Force key that is used in conjunction with normal movements. Thus a force jump is merely a normal jump with the Force key held. This is sure to integrate force abilities more naturally into the control of Obi-Wan as well as make frantic battles that much easier.



(Right) Obi-Wan rehearses his planned opening line upon meeting Jar-Jar



firstperson or thirdperson perspective, Obi-Wan has a fixed thirdperson perspective. The reason for this choice is basically the light sabre. Thompson explains: "As a key goal, we are working on delivering a new level of Jedi experience - including the distinctive Jedi moves and more flexible lightsabre controls and movements. The thirdperson camera should give the best balance and provide the player with greater control. My experience has been that when using the lightsabre, most people - myself included - played Jedi Knight in thirdperson mode."

The LucasArts team have put a lot of effort into improving control of the light sabre - arguably the sweetest bait for potential Jedi gamers. They've come up with the Glyph system, which places the control of the light sabre with the mouse. Once the attack button is held, movements of the mouse logically initiate similar actions in the sabre. So a push up on the mouse gives a high slash; a circular motion will give a

spinning attack; a downward motion gives a low attack. There are eight Glyph movements currently in the game. The aim is to offer an unprecedented level of control that is more intuitive than anything seen previously in this style of game. For those who don't have the patience to come to grips with this, there will be a traditional Jedi Knight control option available.

To further help with control of your character in close combat, there is a "lock-on" feature where you stay facing your enemy throughout a battle. We've seen this in console titles such as *Zelda: The Ocarina of Time*. This will help make the challenging duels more than just a constant run-around. It will also give Obi-Wan to chance to use flashy moves like various rolls, aerial flips and force jumps, while maintaining a focus on the enemy at hand.

If you need something a little less cerebral, there are of course other weapons at the player's disposal: the Tusken Gaderffi stick, the Naboo S-5 security blaster CR-2 Naboo basic blaster, the senate guard rifle, ion grenades, the battle droid blaster and the TM-29 battle droid sniper rifle. These are available throughout the game, but as a Jedi you would naturally want to stick with the trusty sabre much of the time. If the Glyph system works as intended, the light sabre will definitely see a lot of use.

Forcematch

As you'd expect, force powers return in Obi-Wan. The powers you can make use of include the big screen famed force push, allowing you to topple battle droids or objects in your path. The force pull lets the

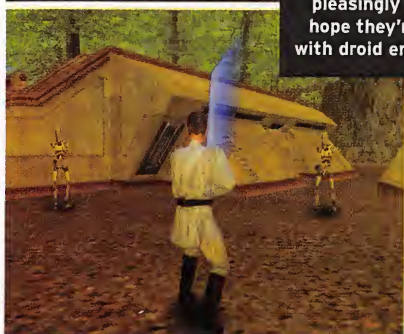
NO NUMBERS

Rather than the usual HUD with numbers displaying details like health, LucasArts has gone for a graphic display in Obi-Wan. You'll see an outline of your character on screen, with a green body and a blue surrounding ring. The green represents your health, the blue your force powers. As you take damage the green will fade; likewise as you use up your force, the blue fades. The aim is to give a more accurate representation of battle rather than a bacta tank economics exercise. Obi Wan's force will gradually restore over time.





The locations appear to be pleasingly diverse - let's hope they're not all filled with droid enemies though...



player draw items that are just out of reach (think Luke in the Wampa's cave in The Empire Strikes Back). Sabre throw allows you to throw the light sabre at an enemy, after which it returns to you. And there's the force throw, which grabs nearby objects or enemies and throws them away from you, as well as force jump, distract and heal. Perhaps the coolest force power of all is force speed. In a nice twist, the force power doesn't make you an uncontrollable speeding bullet, but rather slows everything else down around you - tres moderne!

As Obi-Wan progresses through the game, he gains experience that enhances his force powers. But you won't be able to assign points to gain new powers or specialise in any of them, like in Jedi Knight. All of the powers that Obi-Wan can use are available at the outset of the game. As he progresses, all of his Jedi strengths gradually increase, so you'll heal better, jump higher and increase your force speed (that means everyone else gets even

slower!). In contrast to Jedi Knight, you will not be able to choose the Dark Side and the force powers associated with the Sith. Except, that is, in multiplayer.

Multiplayer has a greater emphasis in Obi-Wan when compared to its predecessor. Up to eight players can slug it out over the internet, and possibly more with a LAN connection. All of your favourite characters are here to play: Obi-Wan, Qui-Gon, Darth Maul, Captain Panaka, Mace Windu, a Naboo soldier, and a battle droid amongst others (possibly Jar-Jar Binks even - whoopee!). All the force powers from the single player game are available including two from the Dark Side: force choke and lightning. However, logically some force powers aren't available in multiplayer. You won't be able to distract other players or use force speed - which is probably a good thing.

There are number of multiplayer games like capture the flag and deathmatch, as well as a tournament-style duel with another Jedi and Escort the

Queen, where a group of players must protect Queen Amidala from another group trying to kill her. The multiplayer aspects look healthy indeed.

Introducing Tanis

The developers found that the 3D engines available just didn't suit their needs in Obi-Wan. They wanted a more flexible engine that could accommodate various processor speeds and one that would adjust the polygon count to maintain framerate. Thus the Tanis engine was created. It is an engine that can showcase the detailed architecture of the levels, as well as connect areas of different sizes more effectively. Tanis also features multiple texture passes for remarkably realistic detailing and light sourcing.

There has certainly been some public concern over Obi-Wan, in the shadow of The Phantom Menace and Jedi Knight games, as well as the much publicised LucasArts internal troubles. "My hope is that everyone will be pleased, and find that the game is right on target with their expectations," says Thompson. "Obi-Wan is definitely a strong next step in this series, and many of the Obi-Wan team worked on Mysteries of the Sith [Jedi Knight's add-on] and Outlaws with me. While it's a new engine, and a new main character, the game contains the elements that made Dark Forces and Jedi Knight great, ie. an immersive Star Wars 3D action game, huge engaging levels, and a compelling Jedi experience."

Obi-Wan looks to be the true heir to the Jedi Knight fortune and, if all is as promised, it will be a standout title come December this year.

INTERACTIVE WORLD

Obi-Wan is not merely a weapon running through a bunch of locations - he is a man. As such he can interact with the world around him. He will have a number of commands that he can issue to friendly NPCs - armed and civilian alike. This can be used to make the innocent take cover, as a call to arms, or as a way to coordinate attacks. There are also a number of vehicles at the young Jedi's disposal. You'll be able to ride the metal steeds of the movie, like the tanks and speeders amongst others.



Gunlok

THERE IS, OF COURSE, "MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE" IN REBELLION'S ROBOT ACTION GAME. DAVID WILDGOOSE LEADS THE TRANSFORMATION.

DETAILS

GENRE
Action/Strategy

MULTIPLAYER
Yes

DEVELOPER
Rebellion

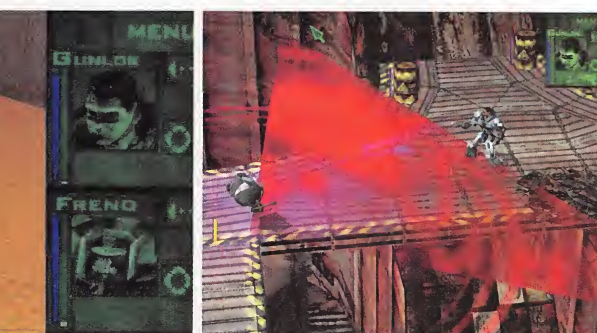
PUBLISHER
Virgin

AVAILABLE
1st Qtr 2001

URL
www.gunlok.com



Big. Bigger. Biggest. Gunlok is ably supported by friends who are, as they say, packin' heat



Hmm, haven't we met somewhere before? First announced earlier this year, *Gunlok* - from *Aliens vs Predator* developer Rebellion - has been subject to some notable design changes in recent times.

Indeed, it now looks so startlingly different - not to mention significantly more impressive - that it feels like an entirely new game. In fact, so much has changed that some consideration was given to including it in our First Look pages at the beginning of Spotlight. In the end we decided that this preview ought to provide sufficient opportunity to display the full beauty of these new screenshots. Let's take a second look.

Exotic weapons

Gunlok portrays a fairly stock-standard apocalyptic scenario in which the Earth of the future has been taken over by robots. Apparently, mankind became too complacent in its relationship with technology, allowing the previously subordinate machines to take control of their own destiny. Or, as the microwave informed me last night, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of my kitchen!"

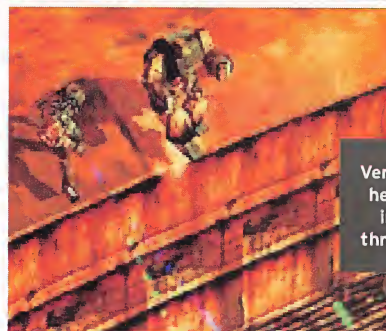
The player steps into the heavily armoured shoes of the squad leader of an Advanced Special Forces Group, the last hope of the human race and - rather conveniently - the sole beneficiary of the latest scientific research into the production of Really Cool Weapons. With a variety of missiles, grenades, plasma and laser weapons in the company of some more exotic tools of destruction such as the Nanofrag and the Epulsar, combat certainly plays a pivotal role in proceedings.

But Rebellion is keen to stress the tactical nature of its warfare. The eponymous *Gunlok* must assemble a squad of companions, each of whom will be skilled in a diverse range of abilities. Considered use of such talents should prove essential in negotiating many of the game's obstacles, whether they be utilised during bouts of mech combat or the deduction of more cerebral puzzles. Also, the potential to equip each squad member with technological enhancements and augmentations - shields, scanners, or increased vision, for example - sees the game begin to chart a roleplaying course. It's through the combination of these gameplay elements that *Gunlok* will allow the player to fully explore the depth of tactical options.

The silent kill

Most prominent among the design changes is the greater emphasis to be now given to stealth. Not only is the field of vision for each enemy calculated, but its range of hearing is as well. AI robots will respond to the level of noise the player makes, meaning that success will be best ensured in near silence. Lending significant assistance in the push toward sneakier gameplay is the accurate line-of-sight allowed by the properly 3D map design.

Since the first viewing, *Gunlok* is now looking much more of a graphical delight. Upon closer examination, these shots also reveal the most fundamental - and curious - change to the game: the hero is no longer a robot, but human instead. Well, that's not entirely true: the original plan was for the player to think that the hero was a robot, only for it to be revealed otherwise later in the game.



Vertigo is not the fear of heights, but rather the irrepressible urge to throw oneself off a ledge

However, test feedback indicated that players felt more emotionally attached to a human hero, hence the decision to reveal this up front.

Instead, Rebellion is now promising a new twist in the tale to explain this mysterious transformation. In *Gunlok*, there might just be more than meets the eye. Time for a third look, perhaps. ■





Alice

FORMER ID SOFTWARE DESIGNER AMERICAN MCGEE
TRAVELS FROM DOOM TO WONDERLAND.
JOHN DEWHURST FINDS A BOTTLE THAT SAYS "PLAY ME"...

DETAILS

GENRE

Action/Adventure

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Rogue Entertainment

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

AVAILABLE

November

URL

www.alice.ea.com

Action gamers are familiar with diabolical themes: mutants, aliens, demons and the walking dead have all come into the sights of your weaponry. In fact, they are so familiar that such elements alone barely raise an eyebrow these days. The extreme in games is common, but what about unsettling? Well, that's entirely more rare.

Take a well-loved story from children's literature and turn it into the nightmare opposite; take a cute, precocious character and turn her into a morbid, knife-wielding, goth child. Take a look at *American McGee's Alice* and see that action games are going to new places.

McGee started out at id Software, in tech support before moving to game design. He's

famous for his work on level design and contributed to both Doom and Quake, in sound effects and programming among other things. At the moment, McGee is a creative director at Electronic Arts and leading the Alice project. His collaborators, Rogue Entertainment, are responsible for add-on packs to Quake II. There's definitely some pedigree here for serious FPS action.

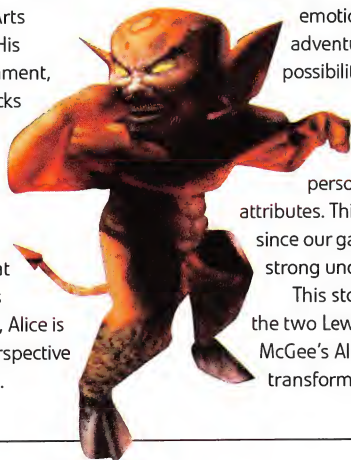
Into the abyss

But hold up, this isn't an FPS, at least not like McGee's previous work. In an unexpected move, Alice is played from a thirdperson perspective (a la Heretic II or Tomb Raider).

Furrowed brows are excused, as this choice can be troublesome from an action gaming standpoint. But, as McGee explains,

"Thirdperson allows us to put more emotion on Alice and her adventure. It opens up the possibilities for new character animations, which convey attitude and personal character attributes. This is important to us since our game has such a strong underlying story."

This story of Alice follows the two Lewis Carroll novels. McGee's Alice is a girl entirely transformed after her last





NIGHTMARE LULLABIES

Alice is definitely no stroll along the beach, so you would therefore expect the music to be on the dark side. Enlisted to write the grim score is Chris Vrenna, long time drummer for Nine Inch Nails and friend of Trent Reznor. We can expect some heavy electro-rock with sampled toy instruments. Should be just the ticket...



Alice's cunning Deep Blue augmentation allowed her to defeat the Mad Hatter at chess



journey, Through the Looking Glass. She's petite and neat but grim, intense and packing heat. After aging a few years, Alice returns to Wonderland to find that things have gone wrong. She still has friends in the White Rabbit and the Cheshire Cat, but these guys are looking sickly at best. Worst of all, the rest of the inhabitants, who were largely harmless, have turned nasty - mad, bad and ready to cut a young girl up. Expect to face the Jabberwocky, the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts, as well as an army of lesser creatures.

The Wonderland universe is a strikingly detailed and visually exciting place. Locations that Alice must visit include the Forest of Shrooms, Vale of Tears, Citadel of Fire. The environments vary greatly: from dark forests

and other check-your-back exteriors, to monochrome castles, swaying citadels and precarious pathways suspended in a void. The more fantastic possibilities have been well implemented in Alice, with swirling abysses in the sky, dramatic architecture and flirting with the very physics of the world. By using the Quake III engine, Alice is bound to be a visual and gameplay dream.

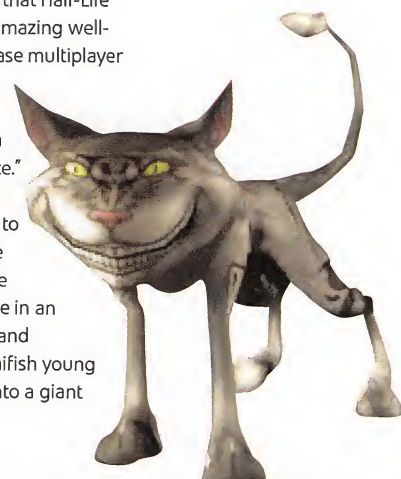
Ghoulish bloodbath

The influence of other action/adventure titles is present, as Alice is not just a bloodbath free-for-all. "Alice will have a 30/70 adventure/action split. The 30% adventure will consist of exploration, puzzle solving, and environmental interaction. The 70% action will be Alice versus bad guys",

says McGee. With the story emphasis and an adventure angle, Alice seems to be aiming for the head as much as the trigger finger.

The only obvious disappointment is the absence of a multiplayer option, something that's come to be expected by action gamers. McGee's reasoning is sound: "With games like Quake III Arena and Unreal Tournament cornering the market on really tight, slick multiplayer, it doesn't make much sense for us to take development time away from the single player game to create something we know can't possibly compete with a multiplayer only game. I think that Half-Life showed you could create an amazing well-done single player game, release multiplayer later on, and not suffer the consequences. This is not to say we're planning on doing a multiplayer component to Alice."

Despite this apparent gap, American McGee's Alice looks to be a fine addition to the single player action genre. It's got the comforts we have come to love in an action game, with a ghoulish and disconcerting new twist. A waifish young thing ready to swing a knife into a giant ant? Truly Unmissable!



The Blair Witch Projects

IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY... WELL, YOU PROBABLY WOULD RUN INTO **MIKE WILCOX** DISCUSSING FILM TO VIDEOGAME CONVERSIONS. OH, AND SOME DEAD PEOPLE HANGING FROM THE TREES...



It's alright, mate, the hall might be dark, but there's only a camera crew lurking in the shadows



When the cashed up hordes of Hollywood's filmmaking movers and shakers choose to throw a briefcase of greenbacks at a raw movie script these days, they can generally polish any shaped turd you care to mention, resulting more often than not in box office success. Yes, we're in an era of filmmaking where audiences expect more bangs and explosions for their bucks, and compare movies by the number of cities that are demolished by either natural forces or extraterrestrial beings in a single screening. And it's this very industry that's quick to measure the success of a movie franchise by the number of sequels it spawns.

It was refreshing then last year to see an independently produced film made on a shoestring budget, breaking not only



box office records, but also some of the fundamental rules from Hollywood's school of successful filmmaking. Haxan Film's offering, The Blair Witch Project had filmgoers questioning the meaning of what it was to be afraid all over again. In a way that Alfred Hitchcock once made famous, the movie managed to send chills through people not because of what they saw, but of what they weren't shown, leaving much of the horror up to the individual's imagination. This, along with

raw production values and its shockumentary style delivery, resulted in a product that definitely didn't fit the standard movie mould.

Ohmigod!

In the same way the makers of the movie have successfully gone against traditions in the film industry, Gathering of Developers now also intends on accomplishing similar results when the movie makes its small screen debut as a trilogy of computer games over the coming months. With a simultaneous ringing of alarm bells in most gamers' heads, a brief look back at previous movie-to-game conversions proves this is an area of gaming titles that have on a

DETAILS

GENRE
Action/Adventure

MULTIPLAYER
No

DEVELOPERS
Terminal Reality
Human Head
Ritual Entertainment

PUBLISHER
GOD/Take2

DUE
October
December
March

URL
www.godgames.com

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 1: THE RUSTIN PARR INVESTIGATION

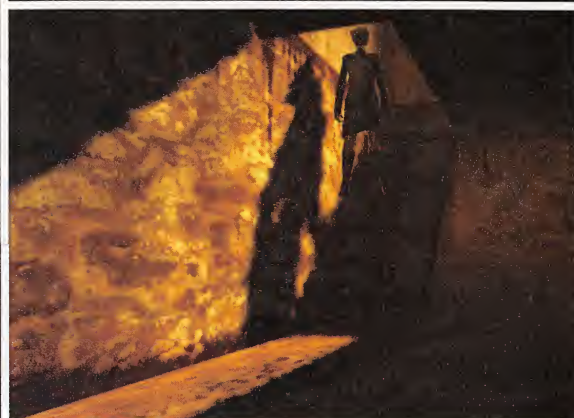
Developed by Terminal Reality, the first in the trilogy is set in 1941. The game is based in the Maryland town of Burkittsville, and centres around the investigations by two of Nocturne's Spookhouse characters - Doc Holiday and The Stranger - into the supernatural forces that drove Rustin Parr to murder seven children in his house. He claims it was the voice of an old woman ghost seeking

vengeance, who was known locally as The Blair Witch. The game will provide the same dark and eerie, yet beautifully rendered, images thanks to the Nocturne engine, while still provoking a sense of horror and suspense of that created by the movie. You will be expected to source information along the way from a variety of characters through conversations, plus take out the odd evil entity.





Using the Nocturne engine, the Projects retain the laser-targeted, twin-gun antics



whole, desperately failed to live up to their silver screen counterparts in any way, shape or form.

Reasons for this have ranged from placing too much focus on trying to match the graphic content of the film instead of the actual gameplay, to restricting the game to the exact plot and actions of the film, to the typical rushed out the door to coincide with the big screen release scenario. Whichever the case, the final decisions are usually made by suits in boardrooms looking to cash in on the marketing opportunities surrounding the release of the movie, resulting in the cheapest bidder being given short production times, and not enough resources.

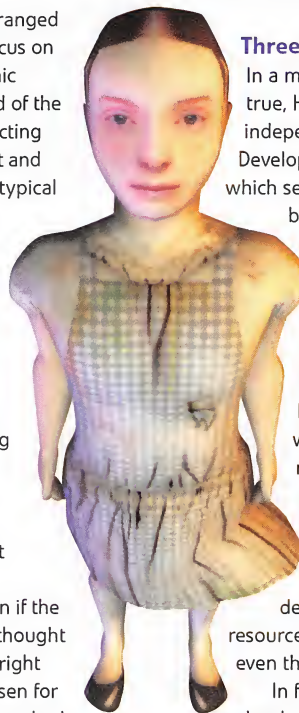
So what would happen if the whole process had been thought out properly? What if the right developers had been chosen for the job? What if they approached the whole thing from a different angle?

Well, hopefully, that's just the case with the team behind the games to be based on the Blair Witch Project...

Three chapters

In a match almost too perfect to be true, Haxan Films has selected independent publisher Gathering of Developers to head up the project, which sees each of the three titles being farmed out to different development teams. Not only that, but none of the games will be based on the actual movie of the young filmmakers who became lost in the forest. Instead each of the games will deal with individual mythologies based within the Blair Witch legend. And in another first, the development of these games will see all three developers teaming up to share resources, ideas, information, and even the same game engine.

In fact, the way in which the developers approach these three games, and how this differs from the



BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 2: THE LEGEND OF COFFIN ROCK

Developed by Human Head Studios, this second in the series is set in 1886 and is based in the woods just outside Burkittsville. A young girl by the name of Robin Weaver is said to have gone missing in the woods, sparking off a search party, which goes in after her. However the search party fails to return, only to be discovered a week later at the Tree of Death, hanging as sacs of

skin and body parts. You play a soldier character that has been asked by the young girl's grandmother to investigate the suspicious circumstances and locate the young girl. On top of this, your character has no memory of who he is, or where he is from, and through a series of flashbacks must uncover this mystery as well. The gameplay centres around a mix of action and puzzle solving.



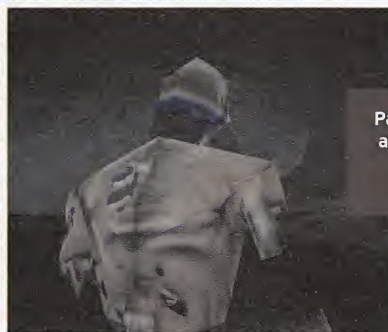


standard movie license arrangement, not only breaks new ground in how to approach movie-to-game conversions in the future, but also on how other developers might improve their products by teaming up with others to share similar resources. The first of the three development teams for this project is Terminal Reality, who are due to release the first title in the series, called *The Rustin Parr Investigation*. Human Head Studios is working on the next in the series, titled *The Legend of Coffin Rock*. And the final game will come from Ritual Entertainment and goes by the name of *The Elly Kedward Tale*.

Erily episodic

While each of the games will utilise Terminal Reality's *Nocturne* engine, the emphasis on gameplay, and balance between action, adventure and puzzles will alter dramatically between them. They will also be roughly a third the size of the original *Nocturne* game, and therefore priced accordingly cheaper. This is the result of quicker development time and half the production costs of a normal title.

However, if previous figures are anything to go by, the teams could have



Pah! No need to worry about these enemies, they're obviously 'armless... Sorry

their work cut out for them turning this series into a success story. While it's been proven before that it takes more than a major box office smash to generate the same excitement in the gaming world, it's interesting to note the same applies back the other way, with a number of game to movie conversions failing in a big way, too. All those that voted for *Lara Croft* to appear in her own up and coming movie, prepare to stand up and be accountable. Though, as long as publishers and developers such as the team at GOD continue to tap into resource and skill sharing opportunities, we can look forward to a flood of innovative and fresh ideas in gaming.



BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 3: THE ELLY KEDWARD TALE

Developed by Ritual Entertainment, the third and final game in the series is set in 1786 and casts players in the role of Witchhunter Jonathan Pyre. This is where the whole *Blair Witch* mythology begins. When the people of Blair find Elly Kedward guilty of practising witchcraft on some of the town's children, she is banished to the woods during the middle of a hazardous winter. Although presumed dead, all of her accusers and half

the town's children disappear before the remaining people all abandon the town. It was then forty years later that Burkittsville was founded on the area that was once Blair. The gameplay is more action based than the previous two. However, given the period of time, the developer has chosen to use a spellcasting/ combat system, which ties in seamlessly with the *Blair Witch* Universe.



Starship Troopers

MELBOURNE'S BLUE TONGUE SOFTWARE GET INSPIRED BY THE NOVEL RATHER THAN THE CHEESY FILM, WHILE MARCH STEPNIK IS KILLED BY BLACK BUGS IN THE VIDEOGAME...



This site was probably the scene of a terrible war. It's red... the colour of... blood!

DETAILS

GENRE

Realtime Strategy

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Blue Tongue Software

PUBLISHER

Hasbro Interactive

AVAILABLE

November

URL

www.bluetongue.com

Starship Troopers. If you're like most people, these words probably invoke images of hundreds of gorgeous men and women positively drenched in testosterone (yes, the women too) charging down - and subsequently fleeing from - thousands upon thousands of nightmarish giant bugs. It certainly wasn't the absolute worst sci-fi movie ever to grace the silver screen (ladies and gentlemen, we present to you: *Battlefield Earth*! Coming soon to a cinema near you!), neither was it one of the most inspiring. It was a fun action romp owing more to strong visuals and cheesy one-liners than an enthralling plot or narrative.

However for a large community of sci-fi fans out there, *Starship Troopers* represents a well-loved piece of fantasy fiction, one that Paul Verhoeven simply couldn't do justice in a film adaptation. Written by Robert Heinlein in 1959, the novel featured a stronger focus on technology and the hideously gritty side of interplanetary warfare.

Radical rethink

The original vision for the *Starship Troopers* PC game was that of a firstperson (soon afterwards a thirdperson) action shooter, to be based almost exclusively on the film. With a planned release within a year of the film's cinema run, poor performance in the box office and the proliferation of firstperson action games on the market

played their parts in a rethink of the strategy in handling the license. In that incarnation, the project was scrapped.

Set for a release late spring, *Starship Troopers: Terran Ascendancy* presents itself as a markedly different version of the original concept, and reflects a more reassuring approach to the well-known license. A realtime strategy affair, *Terran Ascendancy* features a more prolific nod to the heights of Robert Heinlein's literary vision in its dealings with giant marauding space insects. "The game draws from both sources - the aesthetics of the movie and the hardcore militarism of the novel," says **Nick Hagger**, producer and designer of *Terran Ascendancy*.

Spanning twenty-four missions in the Third Terran Space War, TA takes the player



through all manner of environments before ending up on the bugs' home planet of Klendathu - the location of the game's fitting finale. Blue Tongue has designed a range of mission types to captivate players, ranging from reconnaissance, search and destroy, and rescue missions. While the missions themselves will be quite linear, there will be liberal use of scripted scenes mid-mission to help keep things interesting.

As for the action: don't expect TA to degenerate into mindless resource building where success is brought about by annihilating the enemy with strength in numbers. Instead, the game lends itself more in principal to the likes of Force Commander than it does the C&Cs and StarCrafts of our time. It eschews any traditional sense of base building, although resource management is in - your units are your sole responsibility in the game. At the start of the game, you take on the role of a cadet lieutenant transferred to the front line, and given charge of a platoon. Manage your troops effectively or suffer the dire consequences in the claws of giant roaches.

"Veteran units are your most important resource," explains Hagger. "The only way to keep your troopers alive is through cautious and strategic gameplay. Grunt-rushing arachnid warriors is a sure way to turn your troopers into bug food."

Battle experience plays an important role in TA; as your units survive battles, points in certain abilities increase. Thus, careful use of your troops is a must if you plan to accumulate a powerful platoon.

"[Starship] Troopers can be played either with stealth or aggressively; and the best

strategy is a mixture of both," Hagger continues. "Each mission requires a combination of tactics to finish them successfully. Sometimes you can avoid a sticky situation by creeping around opponents, but most other times there's no other solution than having to fight your way through the bugs."

"The arachnids can attack from above and below, and can hear you when you patrol around in large numbers. It pays to send out small squads with specific objectives."

Prior to each mission, the Terran fleet takes a xenographic sample of each mission area giving players some indication of what to expect on the ground below, allowing them to choose their strike force accordingly.

Bugs

And what's there to fear? The bugs. Blue Tongue has created more than fifteen different types of insects for the MI to battle, each suitably terrifying. They range from the small yet persistent Chariot bugs to the deadly Plasma Bug - the largest of these able to dwarf their human counterparts.

The score has been evened with the inclusion of 'powered' armour suits - a strong feature of the book that never made it into the film release. These suits - essentially power-ups - fall into three categories (Marauder, Scout and Command - and there are twelve in all) give units all manner of different advantages on the battlefield. There are also disadvantages, meaning careful selection and use of these powered units is a must.

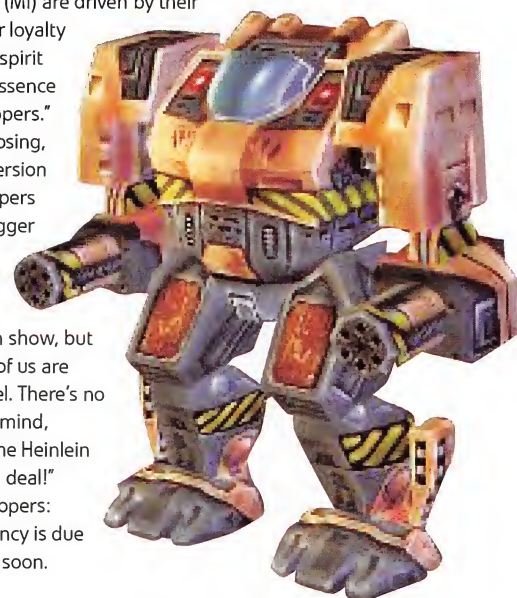
Given the strong use of elements of Heinlein's story, Hagger concedes that the novel, not the movie, served as the primary



source of inspiration for gameplay. "The Starships, the powered armour, the platoon structure were all inspired by the novel. Heinlein's concept of elite battalions packing the firepower of contemporary armies lies at the heart of gameplay. The Mobile Infantry (MI) are driven by their valour and their loyalty to the cause - esprit d'corps is the essence of Starship Troopers."

And so in closing, we ask which version of Starship Troopers agrees with Hagger most. "Most people have seen the movie and the cartoon show, but only a handful of us are fans of the novel. There's no question in my mind, however, that the Heinlein novel is the real deal!"

Starship Troopers: Terran Ascendancy is due on shelves very soon.



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PLAYSTATION



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NINTENDO 64



YOU DIRTY RAT

ADELAIDE-BASED DEVELOPER RATBAG GAMES IS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL GAME STUDIOS, BOASTING RECENT HITS SUCH AS POWERSLIDE AND DIRT TRACK RACING. BUT IS THERE MORE TO RATBAG THAN JUST RACING GAMES? MIKE WILCOX IS ON THE CASE.

I was sitting in my office flipping cards into the rubbish bin in the corner and arguing with myself that 1:30pm was too early to start drinking. Some days it just don't pay to open the office and this was one of those days. The last case I had was trailing a schoolyard ring of software pirates. The day of the bust, they'd been tipped off, and haven't been seen since. That was a week ago.

Just then, as I considered a change to building houses out of cards, there was a knock on the office door. Before I could get up, there standing in the doorway was the tall sexy silhouette of a dame. A soft sultry voice said, "A mutual friend told me if I ever needed help, to come see you". Before I'd even asked

her name, my eyes were all over her like a cheap coat of paint. I nearly struggled to get the words out, "Sit down, can I get you a drink? So talk to me."

I was never big on words, besides she had the kind of voice you could listen to for hours. "My name's Crystal, and I will pay you handsomely to find out everything you can about an Adelaide based gang of programmers,

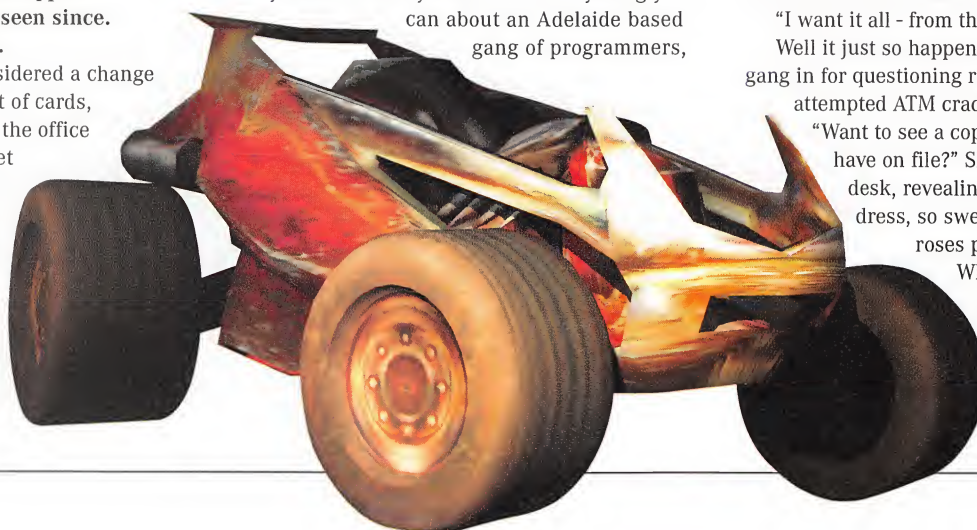
artists, and designers that's been terrorising my neighbourhood. They go by the likely name of Ratbag."

"Don't worry honey, I've been following these guys for sometime now." With that I pulled open my desk drawer and lifted out a file the size of the Yellow Pages. "Where do you want me to start sweetheart?"

"I want it all - from the top," she whispered. Well it just so happened I had one of the gang in for questioning recently over some attempted ATM cracking downtown.

"Want to see a copy of the interview I have on file?" She reached across my desk, revealing a plungeline in her dress, so sweet I could smell the roses printed on the dress.

When my eyes met hers again, she grabbed the file, sat back, crossed her legs (slowly) and began to read my file...





The Ratbag crew: the success of Dirt Track Racing has allowed them to more than double staff numbers in just eight months

SOMEWHERE DOWNTOWN

Let the records show - Location: 32nd precinct, time: 1700, Monday August 14, 2000. Can you state your name and occupation please?

My name is Tom Crago. I'm the Director of Development at Ratbag Games. I joined the company in October last year after working as a lawyer and as the CEO of a small media consultancy. My role at Ratbag is twofold. I'm part of the company executive, which means I assist in setting Ratbag's overall strategic direction. I also oversee the production of all our titles. In that sense my primary responsibility is as a manager. We place a lot of responsibility in the hands of the leaders of each of our departments, primarily our Art Directors, Lead Programmers, Game Designers and Animation Directors. These are the people that really carry the vision for our games in their hands. I just make sure that there's synergy within the team and that our publishers are happy with what we produce.

You haven't always operated under the name Ratbag, haven't you used a less assuming name at one stage?

Yes that's right, as Emergent Software our first project was a flight simulator. Everyone recognised that our technology was good, but no one wanted to run with the concept at that time. Ultimately that same technology found its way into Powerslide. We changed our name to Ratbag after we got our first publishing deal. We have a running joke that we called ourselves Emergent because it sounded respectable, and then as soon as the deal was signed we showed our true colours by renaming ourselves Ratbag.



What are some of the challenges you face as an Australian-based game developer?

Working from Australia has advantages and disadvantages. It means a lot of travel and late night phone calls. We don't want to give our publishers and overseas associates any reason to think that our distance is even an issue. That essentially means that wherever possible we work to their clocks. We value face-to-face meetings, so we travel quite frequently too.

Australia is an excellent place to have a studio because the local talent is among the best in the world. Most of our staff come from Adelaide and almost all were educated in

Australia. And our people are really among the best in the world. There are also some great local developers with whom we get along very well. There's a strong sense of community among Australian developers and we hope that the success of Ratbag will be good for everyone.

The other thing about living in Australia is our partners overseas love to come and visit us. There's nothing better than getting an important contact over here, showing them what a great country we have and persuading them that maybe we're a company they'd like to have more to do with. At the moment, getting paid in US dollars and Pounds Sterling is nice too.



The wild Powerslide was the title that shot Ratbag to prominence

DTR SPRINT CARS

This is the sequel to Dirt Track Racing, and will probably be released in Australia first. DTR Sprint Cars features fully-licensed, real-life tracks, and new vehicle physics to suit the style of sprint car racing. Other features include a game structure similar to DTR in that you start a career mode, where players progress by winning prize money and attracting sponsorship so they can upgrade their vehicle. Twenty tracks are included with up to fifty different cars to pick from. This also features support for LAN and internet play.



Are the all programmers, graphics artists and other members of the team Australian? Is it a difficult task trying to find the sort of talent you're looking for?

They're pretty much all Australian and mostly from Adelaide. Finding good talent is tough, and personally it's one of the most challenging aspects of my job. We're quite aggressive in our recruitment at the moment. We've grown from 15 staff to 35 in the space of 8 months and we're going to continue to grow. Last week we employed 5 new staff. We're very much open to overseas talent, but so far the need hasn't arisen.

ENGINEERING

Speaking of abroad, what effect did the worldwide success of Powerslide have on the company? And why did we never see a Powerslide 2, as is the case with the majority of other successful games these days?

There are quite a few documents on our server with the words 'Powerslide 2' in their title. It would have been fun to make the game, but we decided to move in a new direction. Powerslide definitely did change the company. Its success enabled us to grow and to expand into new areas, including console development.

This natural growth must mean you're now capable of more projects at the one time? How many teams do you have, and what are they each working on?

We have three teams: one each for our two PlayStation2 titles and one for our PC dirt racing games. The two PS2 titles are being published by Sony. One is a Sprint Car Racing game, the other an Action/Adventure title. Our PC team is focused on building our dirt racing franchise following on from the success of Powerslide and of Dirt Track Racing in the US.

Can you go into any further detail on the new projects the company is working on?

Next and Spin are our two PS2 titles. These are working names at present. We're also localising DTR for Australia, and working on a Sprint Car sequel to that game which will be released in the US in September. Leadfoot is nearing completion as well. On the PC front, Australian gamers can look forward to the release of Dirt Track Racing Sprint Cars and the original DTR in time for Christmas. Leadfoot should be released sometime early in 2001. It's been a dry spell for a while, but there'll be a flood of new Ratbag titles starting soon.

Will PS2 be the only console you develop for?

At this stage we're just developing titles for PS2. Our relationship with Sony is so strong at the moment that we're not heavily motivated to seek out new business. The fact also that our current staff are fully utilised, and we're

DIRT TRACK RACING

The American version is among the best selling PC racing games in the world at present. This title is pending release locally while a major local license is negotiated. DTR is the world's first authentic dirt track racing game, with up to thirty different tracks. One of the game's most popular features has been the career mode. The idea being you start with a small amount of money in a low racing league, and have to work your way up to the top competitions in the racing world. Setting up and tuning the car for different racing conditions as well as the multiplayer online aspect has been a big success too.



experiencing such rapid growth, means that for at least the next 18 months we'll be focusing on projects presently in production.

I'm sure these new titles will make full use of the proprietary software engine the company has developed for use in all its racing games. Are there plans to go the way of id software and make it available to other game developers?

Our game engine is our proprietary Difference Engine (tm). This was the engine that powered Powerslide and then Dirt Track Racing. We're totally rewriting the engine for PS2 with a focus on creating a reusable development environment that will enable us to develop for both console and PC in a far less stressful manner than is presently the case. We have come close to licensing our engine in the past, but to date have not gone down that road. It's always an option though.

So with your proprietary engine being rewritten, how does this affect the internal development of titles, and its uses beyond just racing style games?

We've now structured the company such that we have two divisions - a racing division and an action/adventure division. Our plan is to develop titles in both divisions. Our engine would certainly



LEADFOOT

The world's first stadium off-road racing simulator, featuring a tight, close racing style. Players race pick up trucks and buggies around indoor tracks filled with lots of jumps and other stunts, that are typically constructed in baseball stadiums in America. As with previous titles, tuning components of the car will be available as will a career mode. There will be fifteen tracks featuring such hazards as bridges, jumps and water. It's due for release at the beginning of 2001.



Tom Crago: one of Ratbag's chief ringleaders - and wanted in four states

lend itself to other forms of racing game. The physics model is highly sophisticated, and under the supervision of our resident cyber-hero Richard Harrison, I have no doubt it could be adapted to new styles of racing.

THE ONLINE APPEAL

Does ongoing development of PC technology have any effect on the games you develop? Absolutely. Online, massively multiplayer games will play a big role in our next generation of PC titles.

High speed Internet connections will soon be common for PC users. Do you see the implementation of broadband effecting the games you produce and the gaming community on a whole?

with a virtual-mechanic in another city who helps you set up your car to suit local conditions. We think there'll be sponsors, prize money, media coverage. Total immersion. That's definitely what I'm after in an online gaming experience.

What do you see as future goals for Ratbag?

Our goal is to continue to build our PC dirt racing franchises and to move into the realm of online, massively multiplayer PC racing. We'd like to be at the forefront of this, establishing online racing leagues and a sense of community among racing games fans. On the PS2, our aim is to be considered among premier console developers in the world after the release of our first two titles. Like every developer we're after bigger budgets and longer development cycles. We want make classic games that play a serious role in redefining our art form. The PS2 will revolutionise interactive

Damn, she could tell I'd started drinking already. With that I reached for my coat, headed for the door, and said, "Let's continue this conversation over a couple dry martinis." She agreed and we left in search of the closest bar with a happy hour. ■

CONSOLE YOURSELF

SPIN will be the first of two PS2 titles released, and is a Sprint car game. Unlike the DTR franchise, this is a totally new title that's being redesigned from the ground up. It's set to feature real life tracks and drivers, in authentically modelled cars. The two most interesting aspects of the game will be the extraordinary acceleration of the vehicles, and the spectacular collisions, which are the two things these cars are most known for. It will also feature the world's first track deformation system, so the dirt track surfaces will alter to reflect the impact of actual racing, with ruts, grooves, and potholes that will appear as players move through heats, reflecting previous race.

NEXT will be an action/adventure title about which Ratbag can't say much at this stage, but it'll form a big part of what the company does into the future. This title has no confirmed release date.



WE'D LIKE TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF ESTABLISHING ONLINE RACING LEAGUES AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG RACING GAME FANS

Big time. While on one hand we're doing amazing things with AI to make our NPC characters and cars behave more like humans, on the other we're focusing on these massively multiplayer online games where you're up against human opponents. Our vision is of a gaming world similar to the real-life racing world. Maybe you race a car in an organised league with 25 races a year. Every fortnight you have to stay up late to race in the time zone of the host country. Perhaps you work

entertainment, and we want our titles to play a part in bringing video games to a new audience.

At this point, I gazed across at the clock while putting away my notebook, stood up and thanked Tom Crago for his time, and requested that he didn't leave town without letting me know first. 'You're free to go' I said. And that's the state of the case as it stands.

Crystal handed the file back and looked at me. "Not bad at all, for a half tanked private detective."

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IN REVIEW

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As I sit here nursing a fractured skull, I feel compelled to impart some advice to would-be debaters out there. If you're contemplating driving home your point with a headbutt to the noggin of an argumentative opponent, make sure they're not wearing a carbon fibre motorcycle helmet at the time. Incidentally, next time I'm engaged in vigorous debate with Monsieur Fox, I'll consider using the tried and true broken-beer-bottle-to-the-stomach(tm) method that has faithfully served inebriated pub brawlers for decades. The irony of sustaining a life-threatening injury (albeit one that could be considered self-inflicted) while discussing the issue of violence is certainly not lost on me. But I digress.

This month has been noticeably devoid of blockbuster titles, but that doesn't translate to an absence of gaming goodness - not by any means. Midtown Madness 2 and Heavy Metal: FAKK2, while not the most original titles, are definitely worth checking out. And AoEII: The Conquerors is deserving of a place in every RTS gamer's collection. Anyway, enough of my incessant rambling - a migraine approacheth. Turn the page and revel in the intellectual riches that lay beyond, while I try and secure some kind of sponsorship deal with the manufacturers of Nurofen. Maybe some good will come of this travesty...

brettr@next.com.au



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THE PCPP REVIEW SYSTEM

SCORING

- 90+** Gold Award. A classic, everyone will love this game.
- 89-80** A strong title that's hard to fault. But perhaps not the best in its field.
- 79-60** Competent and playable. For fans of the genre.
- 59-40** Decidedly average, probably boring.
- 39-0** A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.

Need The minimum requirements to get the game running at a playable speed.

Want The ideal system requirements for the game.

For The major reasons why you'll like the reviewed game.

Against The major reasons why you won't.

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MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

Roll up! Roll up! See the amazing, death-defying, leaping pedestrians!

DETAILS

GENRE

Arcade smash-em-up racing

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Angel Studios

PUBLISHER

Microsoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Microsoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G8

NEED

P11-266, 32Mb RAM, 350Mb HDD

WANT

P111, 128Mb RAM, 3D Videocard (D3D)



A couple of VWs consummating their relationship



It was a Sunday. And as much as I tried, I couldn't break tradition. After all, what better way to get familiar with your surroundings than to slow down and give yourself the time to soak it all in? So there I was, cruising the streets of San Francisco, adhering to the speed limit (well, okay, I was driving *well* under), getting a feel for the fabulous city. Consider me the penultimate tourist.

At first glance, everything seemed in order: cars followed basic road rules; traffic lights regulated the flow of vehicles throughout the CBD. But then I noticed the positively mystifying behaviour of San Fran's many pedestrians. As I *slowly* drove down an amicably wide street shouldered by amicably wide footpaths, San Fran's citizens either dove away from my vehicle or threw themselves spreadeagle against the nearest wall to avoid any contact. What made it even stranger was that the average distance between me and them was a good three to four metres. I couldn't help but wonder what had instilled such a heavy sense of paranoia within these people.

Then it all fell into place. I pulled up behind a procession of half a dozen cars at a red light. The first car at the intersection failed to move with the change to the green light. A motorist a few cars back decided that this just wasn't good enough and proceeded to violently ram the car in front of him up the rear tail-pipe. The ensuing cacophony was not surprising. It didn't take long for cars to be pushed into the opposite lane of traffic, resulting in a quite a spectacular pile up. I simply drove on by.

It didn't stop there. A separate incident saw a car approaching in the opposite direction attempt a rather dangerous 180 degree turn, colliding head on into other traffic. Further incidents repeated this continuing trend. Jeezus! No wonder the pedestrians are such neurotic gits. These drivers are maniacs!

Midtown Madness 2's charm, much like that of its predecessor - Midtown Madness, the cunning snakes - lies in its ability to immerse players within an accurate model of a city's road transport system. And then let them loose. The urban eco-system is so well presented that it is indeed quite satisfying to embark on a Sunday Drive to simply observe the AI at work.



MIND THE GAP

While you'll spend a lot of your time driving on (and flying over) the streets (and waterways) of San Francisco and London, it is the London map that also offers a more subterranean alternative.

The Underground rail network of tunnels serves a perfectly viable driving route, and can provide quite a valuable shortcut. However, players must be mindful of the Tube that passes through quite regularly - one hit can cause quite a substantial amount of damage to your vehicle.



SELECT VEHICLE

OPTIONS ? - X



RELATIVE PERFORMANCE SCORES

HORSEPOWER	
TOP SPEED	
DURABILITY	
MASS	

To unlock this vehicle, place 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in five San Francisco Blitz Races

VEHICLE Freightliner Fire Truck

COLOR Red

TRANSMISSION Automatic

VEHICLE SHOWCASE

BACK

GO DRIVE

The economy model: rear half optional



Pommy drivers: insane

Of course, causal appreciation of the fine AI that the developers have coded in to the game is hardly what Midtown Madness 2 is all about. Nay, the game's about tearing shit up; throwing some much needed chaos and anarchy into the normal order of things, and seeing what comes of it.

The premise is simple: racing is infinitely more thrilling when the lives of innocent road users and pedestrians, and millions of dollars worth of private and public property are seemingly at stake.

Midtown Madness 2 is a racing game set within the confines of two busy and crowded modern cities. Think about the alternatives - which would you prefer? Taking a tight turn and skidding out of control into a barrier or some trees (a la Formula One or rally car racing)? Or taking a similar turn, rebounding off a famous landmark and crashing into a heap of oncoming traffic, causing a spectacular accident with motor parts and mail boxes, street lamps and telephone boxes melding to become one metallic mass?

You finished 5th



But the prize money will go to the panelbeater

SWAN LAKE

The pedestrians of MM2 have kept in training since Midtown Madness: they'll gracefully leap away from any oncoming vehicular threat with an efficiency second to none. They've even perfected an astounding new technique granting temporary invulnerability (the "hug the wall and pretend it's not happening" manoeuvre), meaning drivers with a sadistic streak (a la Carmageddon) won't get much satisfaction here.



throwing some much needed chaos and anarchy

Therein lies MM2's thrill: the ever frequent and awe-inspiring pile-ups that occur. (It bears mentioning here that you can't actually injure any of the pedestrians, however the satisfaction of bearing down on absolute innocents remains intact.)

A modest sequel

Angel Studios hasn't done a great deal to the original Midtown Madness formula. You choose a car from a pool of many, select a basic race mode from one of four driving options, and hoon away. The essence of the first makes it to the sequel, warts and all.

However the one change that does leap out and slap you about a bit is the inclusion



Gosh, what could MM stand for? Motoring Mini, perhaps...



Night driving, a la Lost Highway



English stereotypes - always good fun



Trust March to pick the car with the flowers on it

of two new play areas. Rather than go for a nondescript, generic American town (as seen in Midtown Madness), the developer has admirably simulated two of the world's most popular and easily recognisable cities - London, England, and San Francisco, USA. These have been modelled exceptionally well, with particular attention paid to a faithful reproduction of the respective cities. Included in these are well-known landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge (and Park), the Civic Center, the Soma district, as well as London Bridge, London Tower, Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Visitors of both should find that both maps are quite authentic. The net effect of these new settings is a more tangible sense of "actually being there", of being part of a virtual world.

The other substantial new addition to MM2 is the game mode, Crash Course. As either a budding London cabbie or an apprentice stunt car driver in San Francisco, you embark on a series of missions teaching you the skills to become a fully-fledged hoon. This is the game's much needed tutorial section (although it's not called that), and exemplifies the more detailed driving model and the greater emphasis on action racing.

THE VEHICLES

There are nine new vehicles to play around with in MM2. While a handful are but enhancements of one style of car (there are three types of VW Beetles and three types of Ford Mustangs), there are a couple of straight out newcomers. How about the Aston Martin Vantage or the Audi TT? A Mini, or at the other end of the scale, a huge firefighting truck? Each type of vehicle handles differently, especially the large heavy vehicles (like the bus and trucks) which are prone to tipping. Two thirds of the cars are accessible at the beginning of the game, while the remainder must be unlocked by completing the racing and crash course modes of the game proper.



Most lessons (or missions) are quite challenging, with high pass requirements to be met before progress on the next can occur. The up side of this is that you *will* learn how to drive on two wheels, realise the advantages of flight, powerslide your way outta hell and quite simply master the control of the vehicles at the end of each course. You will also get to know San Fran and London like the back of your hand. The down side is that frustration may get the better of you time and time again as you

attempt a particular class for the 13th time. MM2 seems to have found a decidedly evil addition point between frustratingly hard and challenging.

Once you have passed through the crash course both in London and San Francisco, you can then embark on the game modes that make a repeat appearance from Midtown Madness. Cruise (where you drive about the cities with no particular goals), Blitz (go through the checkpoints in any order), and

ONLINE

<http://www.angelstudios.com/midtown2.html>
Angel Studios takes you on a tour of its favourites



<http://www.zone.com/MicrosoftGamingZone>
Play MM2 here against others for free

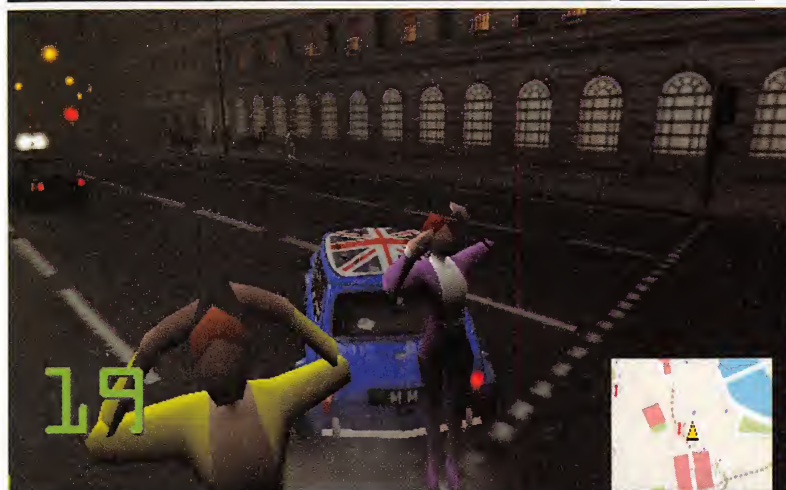




Who's up for a game of Scotland Yard?

FLYING HIGH

Not only are huge airborne stunts possible in *Midtown Madness 2*, they're required. One particular San Francisco mission sees the player recreate a staple telemovie-inspired action driving sequence. Racing down the hilly streets of the cosmopolitan town, players launch their vehicle off the pier and onto a waiting garbage barge. Similarly in London, not even the drawing of London Bridge is enough to slow down the gung ho driver. The partly raised sections of roads serve as perfect platforms to send your vehicle flying over to the other side.



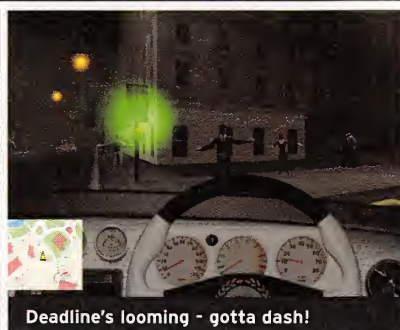
Simon says, "Put your hands on your head and leap from the path of speeding cars"



Inspired by *The Italian Job*, no doubt



Subtle but insidious advertising



Deadline's looming - gotta dash!

Checkpoint Race (beat a host of other AI racers through the checkpoints to the finish line).

Sure the game offers thrills in these singleplayer modes, but they're cheap. The AI of the other road users is really quite uninspiring, and by the time you've mastered the Crash Course modes, the other race modes lack an equivalent challenge. And *Midtown Madness 2*'s virtual cities only work in the longterm when serving as a backdrop to some spectacular racing...

The multiplayer feature of *MM2* is its saving grace. All the game modes of singleplayer can be played against up to seven other players, with the addition of one new multiplayer-only mode: Cops and Robbers. While the standard modes offer some fun and challenging racing scenarios, it is Cops and Robbers which proves to be the most exciting. One player

has the gold and has to try to get it back to base, while the other players have to try to stop them getting away with it. The premise makes for some truly intense racing, putting all of your recently acquired racing skills to the test as you race to cut them off and put their racer out of commission. Immense amount of fun is to be had with this, and I have a feeling this might become the multiplayer game of choice in the PCPP office over the coming months.

Break some rules

Apart from the new settings and a small collection of padded extras, not much has changed under the hood in the garage between *MM* and *MM2*. The new additions and settings are quite welcome, and the new multiplayer mode makes for some fantastically fun arcade racing.

The in-game stunt instructor sums up *Midtown Madness 2* perfectly during training: "Nobody wants to see a movie where the action hero puts on the turn signal and yields to pedestrians, now, do they?"

Of course they don't. And when it comes to computer games, this adage seems infinitely more appropriate. Sure it's fun sticking to the rules. But it's nowhere near as much fun as breaking them. Ultimately, *Midtown Madness 2* is a short, but very, very sweet, racing adventure.

March Stepnik

PCPP

FOR

- Intense racing (in multiplayer especially)
- Stomach churning spills
- Detailed (and familiar) cities in which to hoon

AGAINST

- Can be frustratingly difficult
- Slow down a problem at times
- Limited range of game modes

OVERALL

Arcade racing to rival the infamous *Crazy Taxi*

82%

HEAVY METAL FAKK 2

This review does not feature even one faking pun

DETAILS

GENRE

Action/Adventure

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Ritual
Entertainment

PUBLISHER

Gathering of
Developers

DISTRIBUTOR

Jack of all Games

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

P-233, 32Mb RAM

WANT

PII-400, 64Mb
RAM, 3D Videocard



Don't ask directions of someone holding a big sword



Julie trims her garden fern

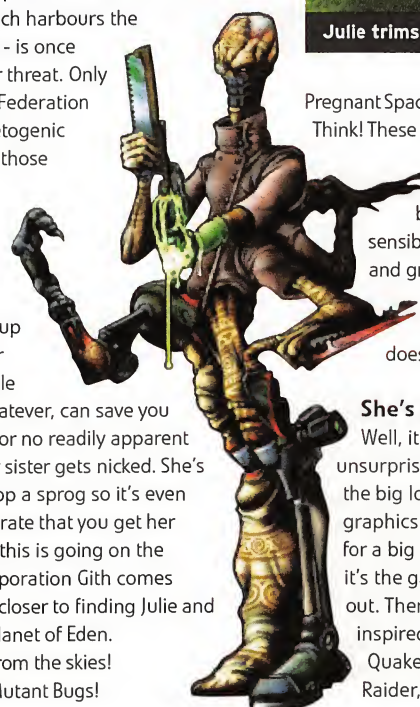


Listen closely, my children, and I'll tell you a story. In the late 70s, when every man, woman and child on the planet read comics, a marvellous European comic called Heavy Metal was made into a movie. Having nekkid ladies and swearing did wonders for the otherwise ordinary film, but what it actually achieved was serious advances in animation. It was a beautiful work.

Now, something like 25 years after the initial film was released, the sequel has been produced. Written by Kevin Eastman, co-inventor of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, designed by comic genius Simon Bisley, it stars the famous beauty, B-grade queen Julie Strain. And in the proud tradition of distribution that saw the Episode 1 novel out before the film, we present the game adaptation long before the film. And, in defiance of long tradition, guess what? The game doesn't suck. In fact, it's really rather enjoyable.

You take the part of the amazonian protector of the planet Eden. The eponymous Julie defeated some evil space dude some time ago and now has to once again take up arms, as her beautiful planet - which harbours the water of life - is once again under threat. Only the FAKK 2 (Federation Assigned Ketogenic Killzone, for those keeping score) satellite, which apparently blows stuff up real good or warns people away or whatever, can save you now. Then for no readily apparent reason your sister gets nicked. She's about to drop a sprog so it's even more desperate that you get her back. While this is going on the religion-corporation Gith comes closer, ever closer to finding Julie and her home planet of Eden.

Horror from the skies!
Asteroids! Mutant Bugs!



Pregnant Space Cows! Green Lizard Men I Think! These are only a taste of the battle you will face. The plot is rather odd, taking the best of that tacky genre sensibility that the Europeans so love and grafting it onto American cheesecake SF. But this is no movie review, so how does it play?

She's got the moves

Well, it uses the Quake 3 engine, so unsurprisingly it's efficient, handles the big loads pretty well and the graphics are mainly smooth (except for a big clipping problem). However, it's the gameplay that really comes out. There is a feeling here of an inspired collision between mighty Quake 3 and, of course, Tomb Raider, with old Lara making her

COMIC CREATION

A bit of an all star cast went into the making of the original movie. Julie Strain is without a doubt the leading B-grade actress in the world. Kevin Eastman, along with his longtime partner Lairdman of course, created marketing monster TMNT but from there moved into a series of other less famous but well received stories. Eventually he created the comic for the anthology magazine Heavy Metal. Famous since the late 70s, its characters were unashamedly for adults and made no apologies for being so. The member of this cadre with the most work behind him is Simon Bisley. Illustrator of such luminaries as ABC Warriors, Dredd/Batman, Slaine the Hunter, Lobo and many other comics, he is considered the father of airbrushing in comics.



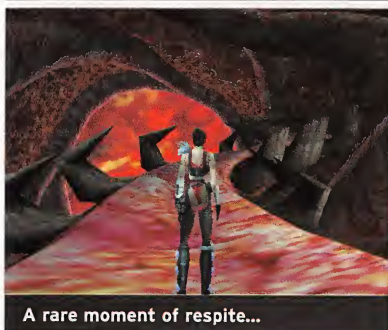
Julie and friend discuss what colour to paint the living room



Fresh from an appearance in Daikatana, the mozzies are back to haunt you



A Hills Hoist would be more practical



A rare moment of respite...



...until she finds a rocket launcher

Asteroids! Mutant Bugs! Pregnant Space Cows! Green Lizard Men!

Fighting really does suffer from the non localised camera control. Trying to juggle between two weapons at the same time as igniting two dozen space bastards while making view adjustments grows to be more frustrating than challenging. I'd also suggest that there is really not enough ammunition on the levels. Yes, the sword and shield combo is fun, but a few more rounds for the BFG-type death machines would certainly be welcome.

Pin-up potential

And could we not mention a character based on Julie Strain? Pin-up girl of a generation, she is probably the best known model for SF-Fantasy in the world. Basing a game around her form, and using what seems to be her voice is a stroke of marketing genius. Play



bosomy presence felt. But I also detect the strange camera angles and two-handed combat being rather influenced by the criminally underrated Shadowman.

There is a variety of leaps, rolls, jumps, sidling and all sorts of other gymnastics to be performed. The camera system revolves around a mouse/keyboard interface. It's clever and makes for an interesting style of gameplay, but what's really needed is a way to somehow level out the view. It's not always convenient to stop and even up your camera, especially when running and fighting.

Using these moves is something of a pleasure in this huge world. It's pretty linear, I'll grant you, but the levels are creatively designed - occasionally you just stop and check things out. And in a pleasant gaming flashback, there is a bunch of secret levels, power-ups and cool weapons to be found.

Of course, one must navigate a large amount of puzzles and trickery to get past a lot of these things. What is it about thirdperson action where designers get so caught up with one particular kind of puzzle? Soul Reaver had its endless bloody blocks, Tomb Raider had locked doors and FAKK has jumping puzzles. Loads of 'em. Thankfully there are very few run like mad for the door that will be open for half a second two thirds of a map away.

Combat is, as mentioned, a two-handed affair, much like the camera control. Mainly it's a shield sword combo, but the use of explosives, pistols, slings, double-handed weapons, big guns and assorted instruments of destruction adds a pleasing amount of spice to the combat. And there is a lot of it indeed. Combat comes fast and thick in parts, yet while there are the occasional cool-ass beasts and level bosses, most often you'll be fighting bloody irritating hordes of bugs.



This caption strip is way too long, so - damnit! - we might as well give up right now, dismayed at the thought that there's no chance of ever making it to...

ONLINE

www.fakk2.com



around with the camera angles enough and you'll see a part of Julie that you never saw on Lara Croft. Is this a good or bad thing? I won't say. But there is potential to have this character reach stratospheric heights of fame and market recognition.

Nor is some of the music all that awful. Occasionally some Eurotrash happy song comes on, but by and large you'll find yourself quietly paying attention to some interesting beats.

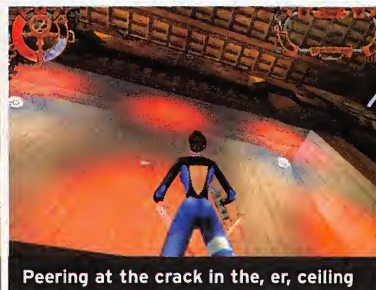
Unfortunately, without the patch this game clips like a damn schooner. You won't know where you are or what the hell you are walking through. Then there is memory leakage. After about an hour the game becomes akin to watching a steam train pull out. Chug, chug, chug. The game should never have reached gold in this state.

FAKK 2 is not exactly the most brainy of games, but for those of you who dig on the genre and for those of you who've not found something that attracts you yet, it's most certainly worth a look.

Christian Read



A shot from Julie's tasteful portfolio



Peering at the crack in the, er, ceiling



Aargh! Attacked by the flying, magic carpet, TV monster!

PCPP

FOR

- Great levels
- Nice design
- Gorgeous graphics

AGAINST

- Bad clipping
- Memory leakage
- Heavy combat to puzzle ratio

OVERALL

Some good old-fashioned but disposable fun

80%



Rolling Stone Web

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ARTISTS
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GIG GUIDE
DISCUSSION
CHAT

www.rollingstoneweb.com.au



AGE OF EMPIRES II THE CONQUERORS

Ensemble continues its fine tradition of great add-ons

DETAILS

GENRE

Realtime Strategy

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (via Modem, Internet)

DEVELOPER

Ensemble Studios

PUBLISHER

Microsoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Microsoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

TBA

NEED

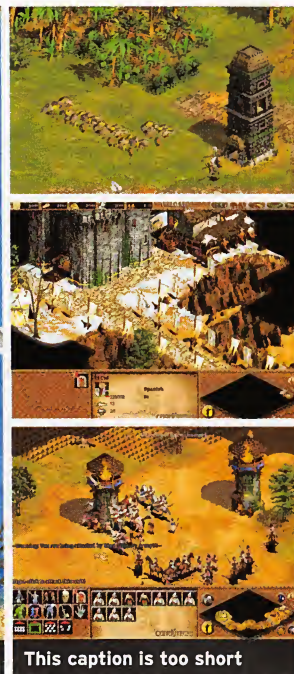
P-166, 32Mb RAM, 200Mb HDD, 4xD

WANT

P11-266, 64Mb RAM



You wouldn't credit it, but that sea gets awfully deep surprisingly quickly



This caption is too short

ONLINE

www.microsoft.com/games/conquerors
The official site



aoe2.com
Comprehensive fan site for the Age of Empires series



www.montypython.net/scripts/attila.htm
The script from Monty Python's Attila the Hun Show, followed by Attila the Nun



The main reason I became a freelance writer is pretty simple. I keep really weird hours. I've never, ever been a morning person even when I was a little kid. But right now it's ten to seven in the morning, I can barely see, I'm nearly out of smokes and I'm tasting nothing but the grinds of the coffee I've been drinking for the last ten hours.

I started playing this Age of Kings expansion pack at nine last night and, frankly, I can't see any more and I'm too pumped to sleep. It's just the perfect addition to an already addictive game.

Age of Empires II: Age of Kings came out late last year. In fact, it was the first game I reviewed for this publication. It went straight to the top of the realtime strategy pile and has stayed there. Pretty much every game in the genre I've ever reviewed has been up against it as a benchmark and I can think of only one game, Earth 2150, that approaches it. And I reviewed that only last month.

So, how does one make a brilliant game better? Well, you add even more civilisations, you add extra weaponry and units, you add new maps, and you add new historical campaigns. Let's break 'em down one at a time.

In keeping with the theme of the game - that's conquest - most of the new races in the game are based around the vast series of land wars which rocked the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance.

The Koreans, filled with tricky war machines and the impressive turtle ships, are a new arrival. Some of the most impressive architecture comes with this culture. Then there are the Aztecs, who have some of the more elite infantry in the game as well as fanatical zealots, but who seem to lack something in the way of sheer technological discipline. The Mayans are not only perhaps the most industrious folk but will fiercely defend their cities to the last. The Spanish benefit from firepower and technological bonuses as well as their own rigid religious troops. My favourites would still have to be the ghoulish Frankish throwing axemen and now they are even better.

There are other unit improvements as well. The Huns, who have an enhancement called Atheism, have utterly lethal cavalry units but don't much hold with building. The Aztecs have the hardcore psycho Elite Jaguar Soldiers. However, I'd argue that the Spanish, and the Conquistador units they specialise in as well as their advanced Trebuchet units, are simply too powerful. Not that this spoils the

game or anything of the sort, but you should be aware of it for multiplayer purposes. Watch out for Chinese rocketry also.

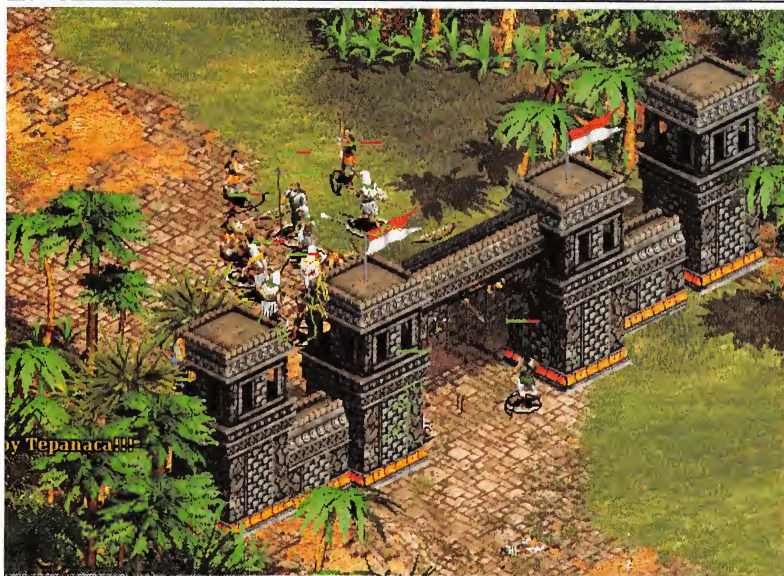
The new troops and soldiers also complement the fact that each race, both in the original game and the expansion, has new technology that is completely unique to it. Not always is this a visible piece of machinery or a building. The Aztecs have the Garland Wars that train elite troops to be even more elite and the Japanese have a Kataparuto, which boosts this nation's lack of siege machinery. The Vikings have the fearsome Berserker gang, and the Teutons use crenellated castles.

The expansion also makes a variety of improvements to the artificial intelligence used in gameplay. A good example is that villagers now automatically begin harvesting a resource after they construct the corresponding mine, and high level siege weapons won't automatically attack an enemy target in the midst of friendly troops. A simple addition automatically reseeds farms and military units have more preprogrammed actions to take. In addition, the expansion adds new arctic and tropical terrain tilesets and rather fetching new building designs.

With these come new map designs including geographically accurate maps of certain hotly contested areas around the world.

RACIAL STEREOTYPES

The new races all have particular strengths and weaknesses. The Spaniards have the Superiority skill which allows even their workers to be an effective military force. Without a doubt they are the most effective military race and are the race to play for gun heads. The Huns use Atheism as their speciality trait. This increases enemy Wonder building time and made Hun spies far more effective. They also have cheap and savage cavalry and are one for player who likes mobile strikes at many enemies. The Aztecs pride themselves on their martial ability and have several unique units. The Garland Wars increases their already formidable infantry. Aztecs suit players who enjoy having a strong military force which is flexible. The Mayans may not be a military power but certainly have bonuses that make them the most industrious of the races. Walls at half price and 20% longer lasting resources means they are one for the empire builders.



Chaos ensued when it dawned the enemy could bypass the gate through the trees



My, what an interesting weathervane!



I think I've lost all sense of scale

pleasantly authentic to a big, nerdy history buff like myself

The Japanese map is an outline of the main islands of Japan and the map of Texas accurately represents a big, hellish dry land mass. The oasis maps reflect an Arabic area. Actually, they are not as cool as they sound, in that they are just random maps and as such the battles fought there have no real purpose.

Of course, during the excellent campaigns certain historical events are indeed recreated and this time there is a focus on the wars that were conducted by the famous conquerors of history. Attila, El Cid, Harald and others are all represented here. The wars are fierce and, in a major improvement over the unimpressive visuals of the "geographic" maps, we follow these leaders through their entire histories, including all the historical major battles they fought. These are hard, complicated and, to a big nerdy history buff like myself, surprisingly and pleasantly authentic, keeping up the high level of research and accuracy the initial game maintained.



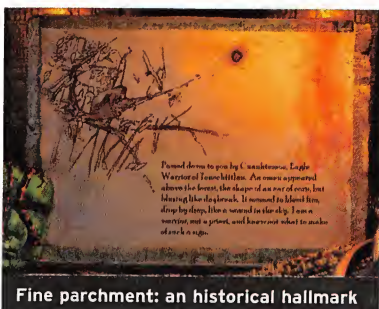
An endless queue of valiant knights formed to rescue Rapunzel from her tower

Oddly enough, one can detect the presence of the firstperson online shooter influencing the game. New styles of modes tailor-made for online gaming include: Capture the Flag, which is generally a match where a Wonder must be defended; The King of the Hill, where the centre of the map must be held against all and sundry; and the Race to Wonder, where the first to build and hold a Wonder wins.

Amongst all these big flashy features are a host of smaller ones that may go unnoticed. Yet combined they add up to a thorough washing off of barnacles from the hull (*Er, nice metaphor - Ed*). Resource costs for certain buildings have been reallocated and the stat levels of a few soldier units have been reassigned. Chatting online shows different colours and the map editor is easier to use. There are far too many changes to really go into but it shows an attention to detail and welcome appreciation of fan feedback.

So, do you need this game to continue playing Age of Kings? No, but if you are a hardcore fan then you will be impressed by the host of improvements. It succeeds on every level as an expansion, both in complementing the original and improving upon the concepts within. Just make sure you get some damn sleep.

Christian Read



Fine parchment: an historical hallmark



Hey, isn't that Moops?

PCPP

FOR

- It's Age of Kings, but better
- Enough said

AGAINST

- Some of the new maps are somewhat pointless

OVERALL

A polished follow-up to an already brilliant game

90%

REACH FOR THE STARS

Reach for the stats, more like, surely?

DETAILS

GENRE

Space 'n' Stats

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

SSG

PUBLISHER

SSI

DISTRIBUTOR

Mattel Interactive

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

TBA

NEED

P-200, 64Mb RAM

WANT

PII-400, 128Mb RAM



Looks like everyone passed the Formation Flying course at the academy



Yep, those missiles are certainly offending me

LET'S GET ALONG...

One of the coolest features of this game is the fact that there are up to sixteen separate races to choose from in various scenarios.

Are you a rampant colonialist intent on getting galactic domination as quickly as possible? Then the nomadic, Starship Trooper-esque Hive are your men... bugs... aliens... whatever.

What is even cooler, though, is the fact that races are not limited to specific sets of technology owing to the nature of the game's R&D engine. This, apparently, makes way for an endless amount of gameplay scenarios. But considering all technologies essentially do the same thing, I would take that statement with a grain of salt.



that look like bugs, would usually reply to my offers of diplomatic friendliness with a much more political version of "Go to hell...". This was then followed by the computer informing me that I was at war with the said race - which is a much more political way of saying "...Or we'll send you there".

Apparently, the first thing that scientists will think when they invent the intergalactic hyperdrive in a few hundred years is "Great! Now we can travel to other planets and slaughter their inhabitants! Yay for us!"

However, future galactic oppressors and software moguls, should remember: contrary to the opinion of colonial Britain,

ONLINE

www.ssg.com.au/rfts.htm
The official site of the developer



www.reach4ts.com
The official site of the publisher



www.clubssi.com
A neat fan site with a bunch of goodies on RFTS among other SSI products



This is a 'fun' game. Inverted commas are necessary because *Reach For The Stars*, while enjoyable, is not 'fun' in the sense that *Quake* or *C&C* are 'fun'. Those games, owing to their superficiality, appeal to almost everyone.

However, in-depth strategy jaunts such as this lend themselves to a specific type of a gamer - one who likes to get into the nitty gritty statistical details of running a ruthless galactic empire. A gamer who enjoys plotting a battle rather than fighting it; a gamer who prefers the ruthless red tape of bureaucracy to the callous brutality of unplanned war.

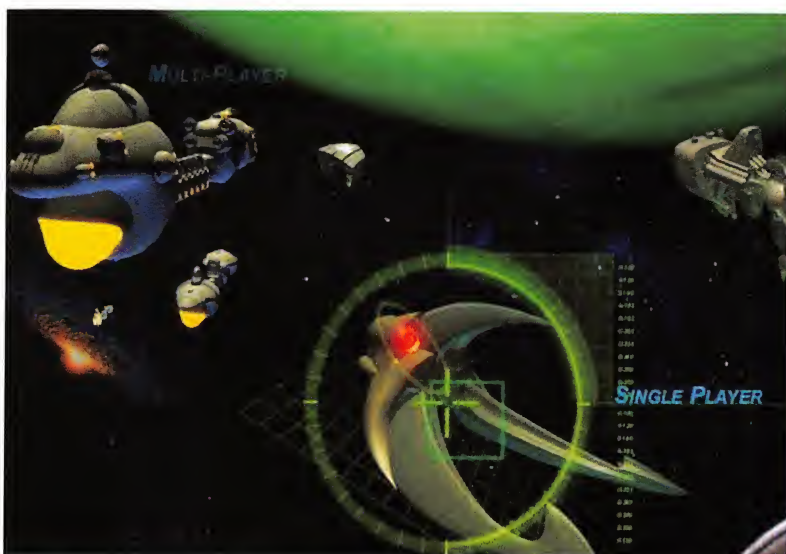
Hellish aliens

Technically speaking - which is the type of language fans of this genre will understand - *Reach For The Stars* is not exactly spectacular. The graphics are decent at best, and audio treats are few and far between. Although it must be said that the lack of 3D trickery and other such aesthetic treats somewhat adds to overall austere atmosphere of the game - which is, at its essence, simple and to the point strategy

gaming. There are some noticeable design bugs - such as overlapping textures and jittery AI - which really cannot be attributed to anything else but sloppiness on the programmers part. Nothing major perhaps, but noteworthy nonetheless.

One flaw which is major, however, is the interface. Apparently quite some time was spent developing what is touted as a completely user-friendly interface - fun and easy to use. Well, owing to often absurd complexity inherent in issuing simple orders, the interface is about as 'fun' as getting punched in the stomach by your grandma. Take note SSG: if we want to send a ship to another planet, just let us click on the ship, click on the planet and be done with it. Don't make us take a course in quantum mechanics and mathematical theory before we can figure out how to do it.

Set in a hyper-future reminiscent of *Star Trek*, the plot essentially revolves around the standard megalomaniacal lust that apparently possesses the entire universe around 2050. Out of the sixteen races in the game, I encountered just two that were friendly. The others, particularly the ones



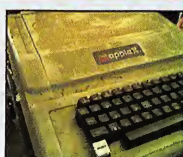
The menu screen. Nnngh! Who decided to put this on the page?



Quick, everyone, look at the pretty cutscene before it disappears!

A CHALLENGE

Reach For The Stars was originally released in 1983 on the old AppleIIe. Apparently. You see, the thing is, no one has a copy. After spending hours looking on the internet, I found not so much as a mention of the original version. Refusing to be discouraged, I then proceeded to ring SSG - the makers of the game - to see if they could supply me with a copy or a screenshot or anything at all helpful.



Nothing. The people who made the game can offer no material evidence for its existence. So, if any of you Indiana Jones types out there fancy a bit of treasure hunting and actually do manage to find a copy of the original, let me know will ya?



One look at screens like these two...

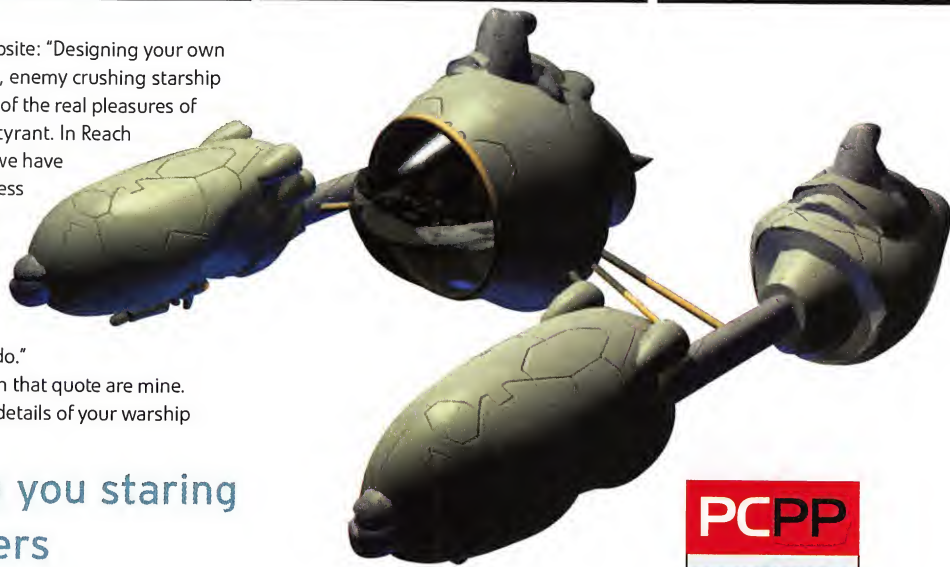
...and the captions dozed off

running an empire does not just mean annihilating everything and sorting out the rubble later. It means dealing with the details of army bureaucracy. It means maintaining a consistent industry and pumping a good amount of funds into research. It means taking a course in astro physics before you can even begin to move your cursor. In a word, it means detail.

You wanna build a ship? You're gonna have to design that ship first, boy. And let's not forget the resources you'll be needing. Where do you get those resources? Well, there's plenty of planets out there - pick one

from SSG's website: "Designing your own space jumping, enemy crushing starship *should* be one of the real pleasures of being a space tyrant. In Reach For The Stars, we have made the process pretty easy, so that it's basically a procedure that you will really want to do."

The italics in that quote are mine. Designing the details of your warship



interactivity drops, leaving you staring at a bunch of output numbers

and exploit it. Oh wait, not that one. That one's got a methane-based atmosphere, not too healthy for the old lungs that. That one? Well, yeah, I guess you could use that one, but look at the gravity statistics - not very conducive to building, is it? New weapons you say? You've got hands - research them. This game gives you nothing for free, and everything's your responsibility. Detail, my friend, detail. And this is where the inverted commas come in. Detail: is it 'fun'?

Cerebral pleasures

In order to answer this question, let's take a look at a piece of marketing propaganda

should be fun. Yet the fact that, once you've designed your ship, you have very little control over it in a battle scenario seems to negate any purpose in bothering to design it in the first place. The same goes for industry. Once you have built it, the level of interactivity drops to almost zero, leaving you staring at a bunch of output numbers. So, why should we detail the specifics of a particular aspect of the game if we can't control it fully?

This can be answered in a single word: planning. It's the planning that makes Reach For The Stars and games like it fun. If you are attracted by this type of enjoyment, chances

are you're not going to care whether or not you can fly your warship - you just want to see it in action, right? Reach For The Stars offers the cerebral pleasure of seeing a carefully plotted course of action take effect without having to get your hands dirty, a pleasure I can fully appreciate without necessarily liking it.

Reach For The Stars is a good game - and I will leave out the inverted commas this time. It won't appeal to everyone, but I hear there is a higher proportion of gamers amongst astro-physicists than the rest of the community.

Daniel Staines

PCPP

FOR

- Engrossing
- A turn-based dream for some

AGAINST

- Too detailed
- A turn-based nightmare for others

OVERALL

Hardcore gaming at its hardest

79%

KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS

Please insert a suitably unfunny Kiss pun here before we go to print

DETAILS

GENRE

Platform Shoe
Firstperson Action

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-16 via TCP/IP)

DEVELOPER

Third Law
Interactive

PUBLISHER

Take 2 Interactive

DISTRIBUTOR

Jack of all Games

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

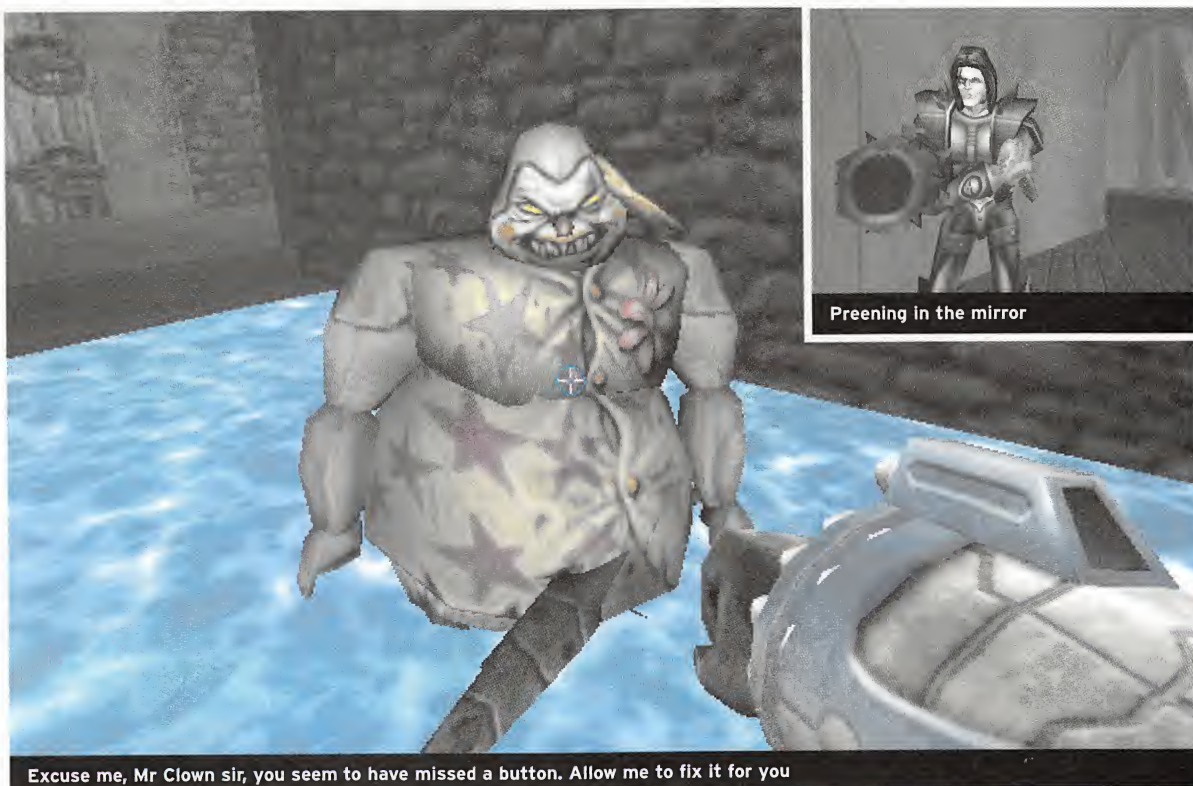
M

NEED

P-266, 64Mb RAM,
4xCD, 3D Videocard
(D3D), 350Mb HDD

WANT

PII-350, 16MB 3D
Videocard



Excuse me, Mr Clown sir, you seem to have missed a button. Allow me to fix it for you



Preening in the mirror

Love or loathe them, Kiss have achieved a remarkably high status in modern pop culture. Most people over the age of 25 will probably have some embarrassing stories to share involving a tennis racket, a locked bedroom door, and the latest Kiss cassette. "It's okay Mum, I wasn't touching myself inappropriately, I was just playing air guitar to the latest hot Kiss song!"

But the time of Kiss has (thankfully) passed and most of us have moved on. So it begs the question as to why a new start-up development house (Third Law), freshly escaped from the evil dutches of John Romero's ego (Ion Storm), decided to take on as their first project a game that is not only about a decidedly embarrassing relic of a glam band, but based on a comic that seems to be a combination of some vaguely gothic carnival gone wrong with said faded glam band. Go on, think up a scenario that sounds sillier.

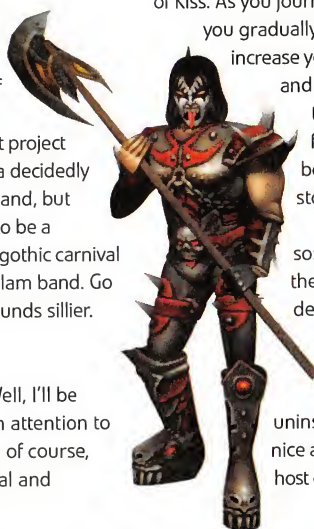
Platform Boot Shoot

But what is the story, then? Well, I'll be honest - I didn't pay too much attention to the backstory. There was one, of course, lovingly detailed in the manual and

opening cinematic. But this is a firstperson shooter, after all. I'm sure that if you're into faux Goth comics about warriors that gradually turn into members of Kiss to take on some devil child thing, you'll be quite pleased with the storyline of the game.

For the rest of us, however, there are four realms for to blast through, each giving you the opportunity to take on a different avatar with slightly different weapons at his disposal. Unsurprisingly, those four characters are based on the four members of Kiss. As you journey around each realm, you gradually find different items that increase your power and armour - and eventually turn you in to the actual Kiss members, face paint, platform booties and all. I couldn't stop giggling at this part...

Third Law has done some very good work with the Lithtech engine - the detail of the buildings and ancillary elements of the realms are pretty, the level design is decent if uninspired, and the game runs nice and smooth even with a host of enemies on screen.



THE AVATARS

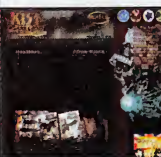
So who are these avatars that turn into the members of Kiss? It's a little confusing (and, some would say, silly), but here they are;

- **Pablo Ramirez, 21.** An avid sword collector well versed in ancient religions. Alter Ego; Paul Stanley (lead singer)
- **Patrick Scott, 27.** A gifted puzzle solver, Patrick personifies the instinctual beast in us all. Alter Ego: Peter Criss (drums)
- **Andy Chang, 33.** A former Yakuza operative, Andy dresses sloppily in cowboy clothing (I'm not kidding, this is straight from his 'bio') and is a smoker. Alter Ego: Ace Frehley (guitar)
- **Gabriel Gordo, 31.** A master of Tai Chi, Gabriel is well educated and patient yet still embodies all the darkest impulses of the mortal soul. Alter Ego: Gene Simmons (really long tongue)



ONLINE

www.kisspsychocircus.com
Official game site



www.geocities.com/Area51/Hollow/2648/home.htm
Wanna find out more about the comics, do you? Ya weirdo!





Enemies helpfully target themselves



Kneeling down for the guitar solo



The weapon design is suitably gothic



I wouldn't Kiss that



Not exactly art, is it?

Magic baddies

This last point - regarding the adversaries - is important because you will be faced with a hell of a lot of enemies swarming you mercilessly almost all the time. Not since Doom has a (reasonably high profile) FPS featured so many swarms of enemies, and it's an approach on the part of Third Law that I actually quite enjoyed for a while. You're not hiding in shadows or jumping out from around a corner to pick off an opponent; instead you're panicking, shooting anything that moves and trying to get to the enemies with ranged capabilities while dodging the hordes that are attempting to swarm you. It's a really exhilarating experience, and one that Psycho Circus attempts, somewhat successfully, to evoke.

I say only somewhat successfully because the way that Third Law have chosen to introduce most of the enemies is

through spawn points. Once triggered, the spawners will keep throwing out masses of one type of beast until you shoot the spawn point. In theory, this sounds quite a novel and interesting challenge for the player. Well, it is and it isn't. It makes for a slightly different challenge, but also one that quickly becomes old, and you may well find yourself quite bored with the tactics required. Run toward spawn points while jumping over enemies, kill spawn point, turn around and kill spawned monsters. Yawn.

Perhaps Third Law realised this, and added in another way for monsters to attack - make them materialise out of thin air behind you. Clean out one area and as you move on towards the next spawn point, magically the once clear area behind becomes infested with all new monsters. Scary at first, but by the hundredth time it's gone far beyond frustrating.

ARE YOU A REAL KISS FAN?

Answer these questions to find out how much of a loser you are! Answers are below.

1. Who designed the Kiss logo?
2. Did the band really put some of their blood in their comic book dye vat?
3. What was Gene Simmons' occupation previous to Kiss?
4. Name the 1983 movie that Gene Simmons was offered the lead romantic role in
5. Was land bought by the band to build a Kiss theme park?
6. Name the country that has banned the Kiss logo?



ANSWERS

1. Ace Frehley, when he was an art student in Manhattan
2. Scarily enough, yes.
3. He was a 6th grade teacher. Yes, really.
4. Flashdance. 'What a feeling' that would have been!
5. Yes. Thankfully, it never eventuated though
6. Germany - the stylized SS looks a little too Nazi party-ish, you see

dodging the hordes that are attempting to swarm you

Kiss Quake

Weapon powers and variety are critically important to an FPS and though Psycho Circus doesn't disappoint exactly, it probably won't really rock your world either. The weapons are pretty standard fare derived from those offered in Quake - a melee weapon, a rapid fire cannon (Zero cannon) that doesn't do much damage, a shotgun (Magma cannon) good for close up damage, a rocket launcher (Windblade), and four varieties of BFGs, one for each character's 'special weapon'. The only item missing from this lineup is a grenade launcher, which is given to you in the form of explosive jack-in-the-boxes picked up on your travels. They're pretty much worthless however, with almost no range at all and a powerless bang. Also on offer is a whip (Scourge) which can be used as a railgun-like weapon with a long reach and as a grappling hook.

The weapons do suit the monsters in the game pretty well, and the amount of ammo left lying around is just about right in volume - but they're not really powerful enough to work well in multiplayer. In fact, the entire multiplayer setup seems a bit tacked on; play isn't all that balanced and there isn't really enough to keep one amused especially when a game of Quake 3 or UT is compared.

So what does it all come down to? Well, Psycho Circus is a decent game, and I did enjoy it for a fair amount of time running around and blasting wacky creatures whilst dressed up like a Kiss member. However, the above flaws mean it just isn't good enough to get any jaded FPS gamer's attention. Unless said gamer also happens to be a member of the Kiss Army (in which case it wouldn't matter what this review said). It's worth a look, but there are far better FPS games out there.

Gareth Jones

PCPP

FOR

- Kitschy cock-rockin' fun
- A very doom-like environment
- You can blow up the radios playing Kiss songs

AGAINST

- Nothing that new
- Pedestrian weapons
- Respawn enemies
- Rather half-baked multiplayer

OVERALL

You may well want to Rock'n'Roll all ni-l-i-ght, but you won't play Psycho Circus ev-er-y day

64%

WARLORDS BATTLECRY

The game that proves realtime doesn't mean turn-based without the turns

DETAILS

GENRE

Hero Led RTS
melange

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-4, IPX)

DEVELOPER

SSI

PUBLISHER

Mattel

DISTRIBUTOR

Mattel

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

TBA

NEED

P-233, 64Mb RAM,
4xCD

WANT

PII-300, 128Mb RAM,
3D Soundcard



Those spikes make for some imaginative fortification

Christian draws an amusing shape on the world map

There have been two game genres that in a lot of ways defined gaming in the 90s. The first was the firstperson shooter, and the second would have to be top-down strategy, turn-based then realtime. So, it's appropriate that in the 21st century we receive a new offering from one of the first series in the latter genre.

The original Warlords was a bit of a classic - it's unique interfacing I would claim directly influenced Warcraft and the like and as such is to be respected. For this reason, Warlords Battlecry is such a disappointment. Not because it's bad because it's not, it's just that, well, it's really not that good. Let me explain. SSI did the Reach for the Stars games, and the original Warlords were, like Reach, turn-based. This is their first realtime offering and I feel they've strayed from their field of excellence.

Ready to order?

In the last three years, we have seen several advances in the overall feel if not format of RTS. The struggle of course is to change the feel of turn-based combat into realtime and frankly, it fails. Mainly this is due to simple gameplay. Turn-based is a far more precise mathematical game. It's Chess, it's Go, it's Poker. Odds must be calculated and risks

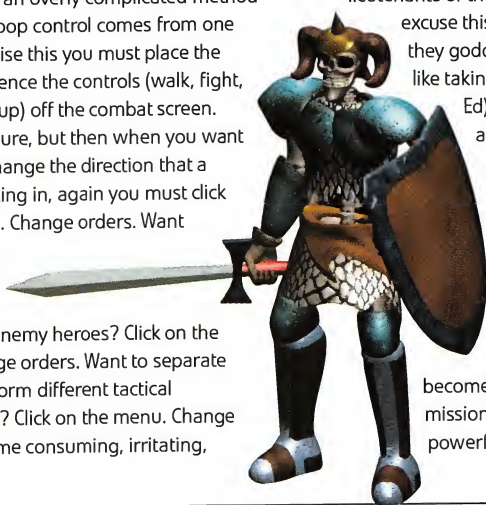
must be taken and vectors computed. This was where Warlords always stood above its competitors. You didn't enter combat until you could be sure of the strength of a force. Battlecry gives the impression that larger forces are the only necessity for victory. The planning once required is missing and leaves a glaring flaw in the gameplay.

Such a flaw is compounded by that fact that the interface is slightly less than intuitive. In fact, it's just a bit of a pain. A realtime game needs to be highly reactive. A one-click system is a serious need in RTS, but Battlecry has an overly complicated method of play. All troop control comes from one menu. To utilise this you must place the cursor and hence the controls (walk, fight, guard, form up) off the combat screen. Not so bad, sure, but then when you want to actually change the direction that a troop is walking in, again you must click on the menu. Change orders. Want your guys to fight only specific targets like enemy heroes? Click on the menu. Change orders. Want to separate units to perform different tactical manoeuvres? Click on the menu. Change orders. It's time consuming, irritating,

hidebound by tactical turn based hold overs and just a pain in the ass (Nnngh! - Ed), especially in the middle of dire combat. After all, when Dark Elves are chewing your flanks you'll not appreciate the time it takes access various menus. One click is all it should take.

Perhaps you are already wrinkling your nose in disgust at this game. Well, don't be quite so hasty, because there are some good points. Warlords has always relied on powerful heroes to advance gameplay and strengthen forces, and this time they've continued that trend. The generals and

lieutenants of the armies are, well, excuse this colloquialism, but they goddamn rock! Nothing like taking your kick ("arse" - Ed) characters into battle and watching the pathetic little troops line up to die. Graphically they stand out from the rest of your armies and do make an interesting addition to gameplay. This becomes more evident when mission specs state that these powerful characters have to



ONLINE

www.warlordsbattlecry.com
The official site

www.ssg.com.au
See what else the developer is up to

www.mediafarm.no/foroksgard/kukaster.asp
Indulge your desire for cow-tossing

84 PCPP



Those snazzy boots sure know how to make an entrance



No battlecries to be heard here

survive until the end of scenario. The temptations against using them tactically wars against the need to keep them safe and can be a tricky thing to balance.

Despite its realtime switch, Battlecry has maintained a look comparable to most turn-based games. Typically, RTS gamers like their eye candy, but this isn't pretty. Sure, it's good to look at and all seems to be in scale - except cavalry is disproportionately large - but nothing is particularly magnificent about it. Everything moves well, the landscapes are easily recognisable and the units move with realism and grace. But the spells of Majesty are better rendered and there are better architecture designs in Invictus.

Sound is again pretty standard. Yes, the occasional voice is heard and sometimes a nice theme will be played over the gameplay itself, but nothing to make you prick up your ears and snap your fingers in groovy time. Do you get the impression it's all average?

Bottlenecked guerillas

If something does really stand out about this game then it's in the scenarios and campaign. Divided up into good and evil armies, these are very interesting to use tactically. Keeping individual figures on the field safe from harm is not the only facet of play that keeps the brain attentive. Often landscape is designed to be used in the missions and campaigns. Things like bottlenecks, plateaus, lakes and all the rest can be used to plan offensive and defensive strategic commands. Sometimes even the most simple scenarios are used: just basic stuff like being outnumbered or having to use Guerilla techniques, or ambushes. Viewed through the eyes of veteran war game designers they become a new kind of fight. They've have been so under-used that one forgets how much fun the classics actually are; battles you have to sit down and plan out.



Clearly the terrain editor holds a wealth of possibilities

WE COULD BE HEROES

Let your heroes be the ones who take on the bad guys in this game. They are the best suited for taking on powerful individual units anyway and the game gets really fun when two major players site each other over the field and rush to battle. But while they are doing that, use your other soldiers as a skirmish or defensive shield. Flanking and rear attacks will kill just about any body.



cavalry is disproportionately large

The engine used to make this is nicely advanced. Your archers won't stand one foot away from marauding monsters. They'll launch arrows from reasonable distances and work well in the formations you give them. Monsters and enemies also benefit from this, and will use formations and tactical displays against your own troops. It can make the game a lot harder but I'm telling you, there is nothing like a big fight against smart dudes. If only the interface made it easier...

The main problem with the game is very simple: it is not an advance on anything, it has not perfected an old idea, and it does not even sacrifice the hard components of a game to focus on plot and atmosphere. It's enjoyable but really rather ordinary.

I hate giving this game a negative review because it's got a large history of Australian involvement in the franchise but essentially it is nothing more than average. The design team really needed to understand that the market place has evolved beyond this form of gaming and updated the franchise to reflect this move. While Warlords: Battlecry is something you could probably give a miss, Warlords 4 is still coming, and it promises genuine turn-based strategy.

Christian Read

PCPP

FOR

- Nice strategic elements
- Great Hero units

AGAINST

- Indelicate interface
- Poor plot
- Unoriginal design

OVERALL

Turn-based into
realtime just
doesn't quite fit

62%

ALL STAR TENNIS 2000

Your chance to "be" Lleyton Hewitt

DETAILS

GENRE

Sports Sim

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-4)

DEVELOPER

Aqua Pacific

PUBLISHER

Ubi Soft

DISTRIBUTOR

Ubi Soft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

P-166, 32Mb RAM

WANT

PII-266, 64Mb RAM



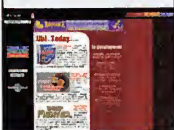
The old glue-on-the-service-line trick



One of the more exciting views on offer

ONLINE

www.ubisoft.co.uk/
It's rumoured that it won't be released in the US, so you'll need to visit our "local" European site for any patches and addons.



PCPP

FOR

- Nice ball physics
- Real players to compete against

AGAINST

- Dated graphics
- Dodgy AI
- No atmosphere

OVERALL

More a drop volley than a smash

62%

FAMILIAR FACES

The selection screen allows you to choose from 32 tennis players from around the world. Some are famous, like our own Lleyton, while others are unknowns, except to the hardcore tennis fan.

Can you guess whom these faces belong to?



Answers:

A Conchita Martinez, B Barbara Schett, C Gustavo Kuerten, D Lleyton Hewitt

A All Star Tennis has finally been released on the PC after enjoying much success on the consoles, and appears to have retained the same easy accessibility to be found in the "99" version that appeared on the PlayStation and N64.

Sports titles can be easy to produce, especially when based on sports such as tennis. This is due to the simplicity of the rules and low number of elements or objects that need to be tracked at any one time. Indeed, many companies have attempted to recreate tennis, right from the very first computer game called Pong, but the majority are disappointing.

All Star Tennis is the latest attempt to push the game of champions to the fore [sic] of every gamer's screen. It boasts a full complement of real players, both female and male, and eight different courts from various places around the world are represented.

Deuce

To appeal to the largest market, the developer has kept everything simple by retaining a control method similar to that used on the consoles. Four directional buttons along with four different shot buttons serve (*Groan - Ed*) all the player's needs. The shot types available are generic, and are affected by the direction the player is moving when striking the ball.

Unfortunately, there seem to be other things inherited from the console versions, the graphics being the main one. The game runs in 640x480 resolution with no obvious anti-aliasing and no opportunities to change any graphical setting. This makes for a pixellated view when compared to other games already on the market.

All the standard tennis modes are there. Exhibition for the one-off game, while Tournament and Season modes provide a longer lived experience and a bit more of a challenge as you progress through the rounds. Speaking of challenge, most gamers will find that once they get used to the response time of the controls, they will quickly master the single difficulty setting that is available.

Advantage receiver

The shining light on all this is the physics. Sure the graphics and the AI aren't crash hot, but the way the ball moves is realistic. Even the close calls that at first glance

appear incorrect turn out to be accurate from the replays.

The players also move realistically, although there are some odd flaws with the ball not hitting the racquet properly, or occasionally the players will appear to be double-jointed and have this amazing ability to force the racquet right back against their arm.

The surrounds are disappointing in their lack of animation - ball boys, umpires, linesmen, and audience are all totally motionless - and the only way the atmosphere works is by the odd call of encouragement or cheer of the crowd at the completion of a good rally.

Overall, All Star Tennis 2000 isn't really any improvement on previous titles, but that doesn't have to be all bad. After all, you're given the opportunity to show Lleyton Hewitt how to really play tennis. Just don't look for it to satisfy your Anna Kournikova mixed doubles fantasies.

Andrew Parsons



"YOU WANT CONTENT WITH THAT?"

You want it all.
You want games news and you want it now.
You want the latest reviews and you want them real.
You want downloads and you want them first.
You want your favourite games magazines online.
You want contentment.

next
more content

WARGAMES HEAVEN

Is a duo of hardcore, turn-based strategy games from Talonsoft

DETAILS

GENRE

3D Turn-based wargame

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-16, LAN or modem)

DEVELOPER

Talonsoft

PUBLISHER

Take-Two Interactive

DISTRIBUTOR

Jack of All Games

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

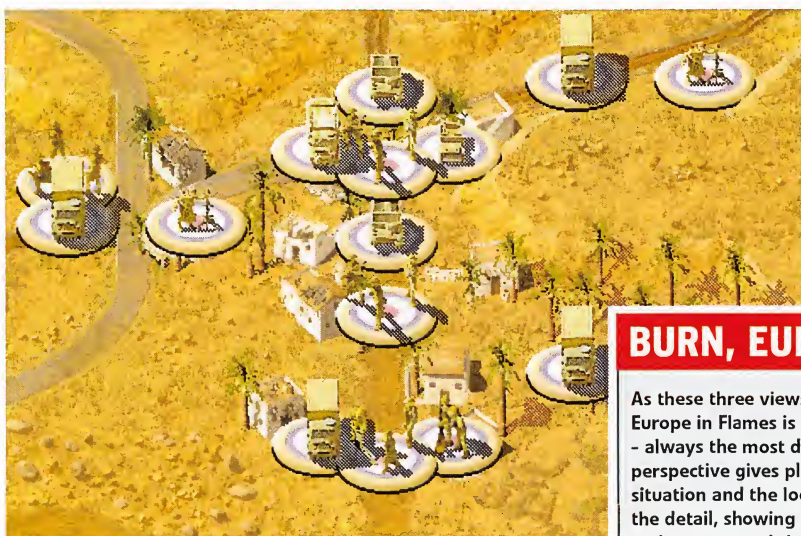
G8

NEED

P-200, 16Mb RAM, 250Mb HDD

WANT

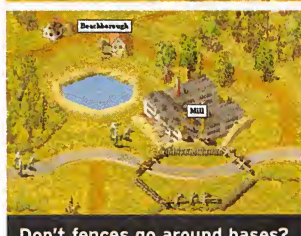
PII-233, 64Mb RAM



Ah, the Great Battle of Biggin Hill

BURN, EUROPE, BURN

As these three views of the battle for Arnhem Bridge show, Europe in Flames is designed with situational awareness in mind - always the most difficult task in a computer wargame. The 2D perspective gives players a good feel for the general tactical situation and the location of objectives; the 3D view drills in on the detail, showing obstacles and identifying the best routes and targets; and the final view highlights the bases of all units to assist in location and movement. Just about anything can be highlighted in this way, including leaders, the supply situation, and organisational groupings.



Don't fences go around bases?



Tanks for the memories! Again

Talonsoft has pretty much had the historical computer wargames market sewn up for the last few years, and with good reason. The Battleground and Campaign sets combined solid graphics, meticulous research and standardised interfaces to dominate the 3D turn-based strategy market, while The Operational Art of War I & II set the standard for transferring the traditional hex-based boardgame concept to the PC. With some potential challengers looming on the horizon, the great news is that Talonsoft has released a couple of excellent value compilations and add-on packs that might just attract some new fans and rekindle interest amongst veterans of the genre. Given the convenience and relatively low price of the new combined editions, many existing users will have some serious decisions to make.

Europe in Flames

Europe in Flames presents the entire Campaign Series on two CDs, including the West Front Elite Edition (with Battle Pack 1), East Front II and the Operation Sea Lion expansion pack. The net result is almost 300 scenarios, 38 historical campaigns and online support for up to 16 players. Just in case that lot isn't enough for you,

first rate scenario editors allow you to create unique battles using any of the thousand or so units available in the database. Remarkably for a compilation, full documentation is provided, and the common interface means that jumping from one theatre of war to the next is hassle free. Operation Sea Lion has also been released as a stand-alone expansion, with the opportunity to fight hypothetical battles in Britain adding a terrific dimension to the series.

Both West and East Front scenarios in Europe in Flames have held up remarkably well since the Campaign series was first released. Actions range in size from small

company or battalion sized engagements, to major campaigns involving the command of entire armies over huge operational areas. A straightforward and highly configurable control system means that you can concentrate on tactics rather than mastering the interface, with onscreen prompts ensuring that nothing is overlooked. The better than average combat model is matched by solid graphics and sound, and the AI makes a reasonable fist of it - although human opponents are always the best with this series. Europe in Flames is simply unequalled as a value-priced 3D representation of WWII.

OPERATION SEA LION

Packaged with Europe in Flames, the Operation Sea Lion expansion pack can also be purchased separately by those who already own West Front. Although Hitler's planned invasion of England was actually cancelled after the Luftwaffe failed to control the skies in the Battle of Britain, Operation Sea Lion gives you the chance to see what might have happened if things had gone differently. British forces include the regular army, the Home Guard and resistance groups, all of which must be coordinated to combat German paratroopers and amphibious landings. You just can't pass up the opportunity to fight over places with names like Tunbridge Wells! Includes 30 scenarios and 3 campaigns in Britain and mainland Europe.



PCPP

FOR

- Simple interface
- Solid graphics
- Great variety

AGAINST

- Some of the scenarios are probably too big to stay manageable with the interface. But at this price? - nothing really!

OVERALL

An excellent compilation for the discerning wargamer

85%

FLASHPOINT KOSOVO

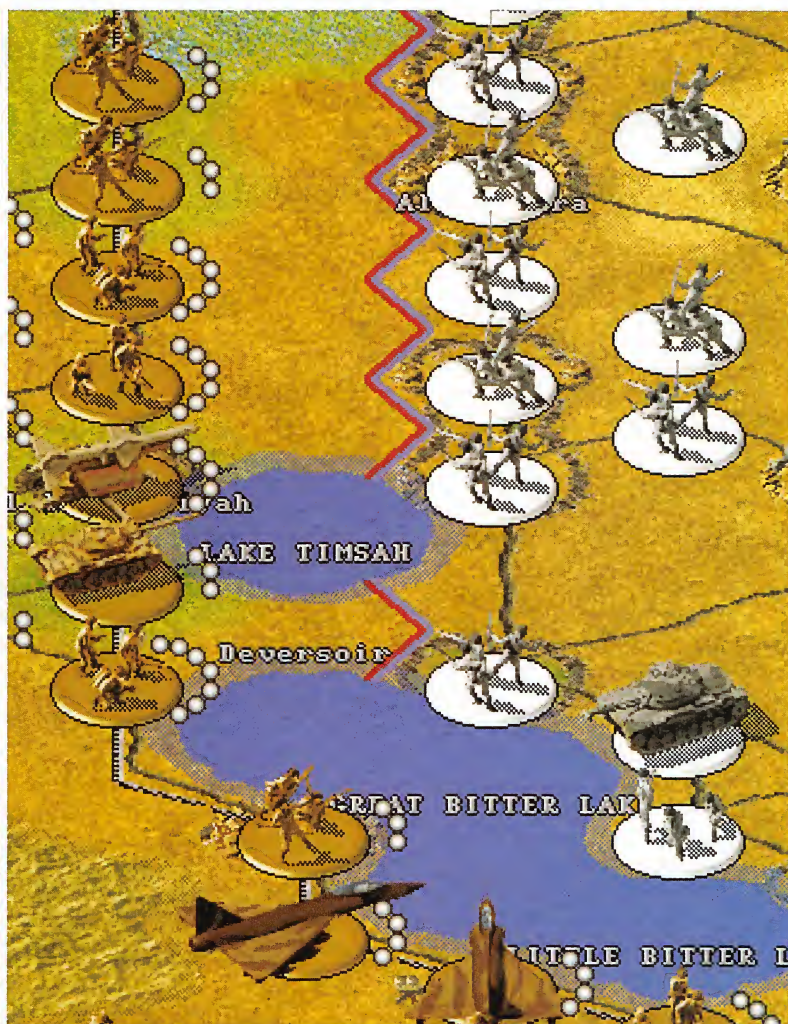
Flashpoint Kosovo is available as part of the Century of Warfare compilation or as an expansion pack for TOAW II. It includes eleven new scenarios (of which Kosovo is just one), all of which are of the larger variety. The mix of units is great, with air power and air mobile operations playing a far bigger role than they did in the earlier TOAW II scenarios, and some interesting geographical areas are included. It's basically more of the same, although the recent and topical nature of some scenarios adds spice. In particular, the sheer complexity of modern warfare is apparent - despite the CNN view that airpower can do it all alone! Great value as part of the compilation, but I'm not sure I'd fork out for it on its own.



The guys on the right look a bit too strong

Century of Warfare

The Operational Art of War I & II need very little introduction to serious wargamers, as no other commercial release comes close to matching their attention to detail, superb combat modelling, or the sheer scale of the scenarios on offer. TOAW I was an incredibly ambitious project when released in 1998, covering all of the major actions between 1939 and 1955. The following year, TOAW II introduced an improved game engine and took players into the modern era. Talonsoft have now re-released the entire series, including add-on packs, on a single CD under the title of Century of Warfare. Documentation is again provided (although it continues the



The lack of scale between units in a hex-based wargame always amuses us



Help, we've all been bombed by large dollops of tomato sauce!

a complex, time consuming and graphically unexciting product

TOAW II tradition of being poorly structured and written), the interface and combat resolution models are standardised between the two volumes, and the whole thing is presented onscreen as a single game.

All up, Century of Warfare has over 70 scenarios, including the Flashpoint Kosovo expansion pack (also available separately),

and some bonus WWII engagements that were not in the original releases. As expected, the database is as good as you're ever going to get, containing just about everything that moves or shoots in the 20th Century, and the scenario and event editors enable players to design their own historical or hypothetical campaigns. For many fans,

the ability to design such comprehensive scenarios has always been the best thing about TOAW, and no one will be disappointed with the combined capabilities of these two games. Despite a reasonably straightforward interface, Century of Warfare is a complex, time consuming, and graphically unexciting product, that is arguably more of a model than a game. Doesn't matter! TOAW I & II are still the best serious wargames on the shelves today, and Century of Warfare offers remarkable value for the socially challenged.

Major Des McNicholas

DETAILS

GENRE	Turn-based wargame
MULTIPLAYER	Single, Hot Seat or PBEM
DEVELOPER	Talonsoft
PUBLISHER	Take-Two Interactive
DISTRIBUTOR	Jack of All Games
AVAILABLE	Now
RATING	G8
NEED	P-200, 16Mb RAM, 150Mb HDD
WANT	PII-233, 64Mb RAM

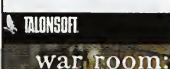
ONLINE

For unofficial scenarios, strategy guides and opponents for Century of Warfare & Europe in Flames.

www.talonsoft.com



talonsoft.com/warroom



www.wargamer.com



PCPP

FOR

- Incredible depth
- Long term play
- Scenario editor

AGAINST

- Too big for some
- Poor manual
- No tutorials

OVERALL
Two of the best together in one great package

81%

PIZZA SYNDICATE

Would you like gameplay with that?

DETAILS

GENRE

Strategy

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Software 2000

PUBLISHER

Software 2000

DISTRIBUTOR

QV Software

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G8

NEED

P-166, 32Mb RAM, 200Mb HDD

WANT

PII-350, 64Mb RAM

It took a while, but those jokes about the Mafia and their pizzerias being fronts for money laundering have finally turned out a game - *Pizza Syndicate* - where your ticket to the top lies in the best pizza topping you can create.

The layout is pretty familiar, being similar to *Theme Hospital* or *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, in that your success is measured by the response to your restaurant by virtual customers. An original idea, *Pizza Syndicate* aims quite high, but misses by a fraction due to the immense amount of features that need to be controlled. Along side with the usual running of a restaurant, like staffing and supply demands, you also need to really take care of business. Not enough cash? Get a bank loan. Need staff? Go and hire some. Not enough customers? Try an advertising campaign. The trick in all of this is not to blow your budget whilst trying to get ahead, and keep abreast of the situation at hand.

The Mafia side of things kicks in when you want help to knock out the competition. This ranges from various sabotage methods



Where home delivery means sending round the boyz to get heavy

such as rat and roach infestation, mouldy cheese destroying the opposition's stock, to outright warfare - complete with guns and bombs and dumb gangsters. But be careful, as this is a two-way street where your business can go downhill in the blink of an eye.

The in game tutorials do little to sort out the confusion, after a while you find yourself wondering why you're doing so well or badly. You also start asking if you'll ever find out.

Agata Budinska



PCPP

OVERALL

If you have got hours to kill, learn to play it well.

52%

WACKY RACES

Zoom into Penelope's Pitstop before Dastardly's Dick

DETAILS

GENRE

Acrcade Racing

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Infogrames

PUBLISHER

Infogrames

DISTRIBUTOR

Ozisoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

P-166, 32Mb RAM

WANT

PII-266, 64Mb RAM, 3D Videocard (D3D)

It seems like a few ice ages ago when I first saw *Wacky Races* on TV. God I hated it. How could any red-blooded Ozzie lad watch a cartoon whose heroes dressed like they belonged on the back of a *Gay Mardi Gras* float? It doesn't quite stand up to *South Park* or *Ren & Stimpy* does it?

Wacky Races is quite possibly the most inappropriate PC title we've seen in at least a year. At least for adult gamers. If you have young kids they may get some enjoyment out of this one but apart from that...

Super Muttley Kart

This is essentially a kart racing game utilising the characters from the animated TV series, some of which are freely available and others which need to be unlocked by winning races. However, the game has a few weak points that stop it from being as much fun as it could have been.

The tracks are very dull and seem to have been deliberately designed to be as annoying as possible. The game also seems

to have some sort of built-in compensator for the computer cars, so that it is impossible to get any sort of lead over your opponents no matter how well you drive.

When you combine that with the great difficulty in getting pickups and the very sloppy car handling you get a game which is more frustrating than fun to play. It's quite hard to understand why anyone bothered converting this to the PC as it has console written all over it.

George Soropos



Not the most aerodynamic vehicle



Visually it's in keeping with the spirit of the cartoon

PCPP

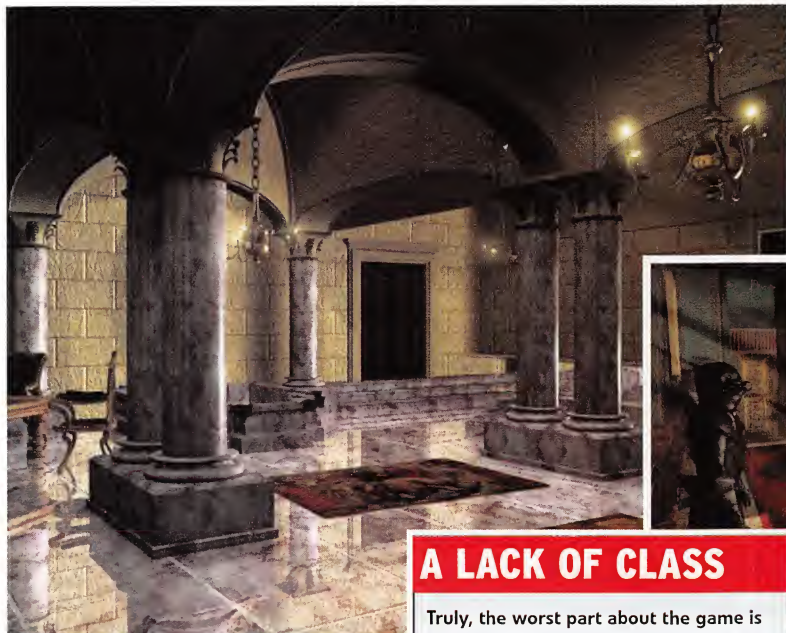
OVERALL

Sloppy racing game that would look bad on a PlayStation

32%

ARCATERA

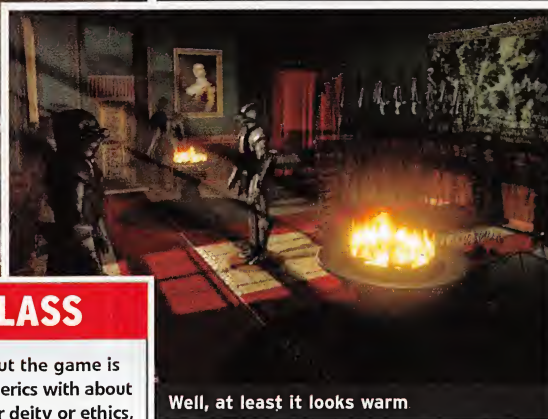
A novel idea ruined by dismal dialogue



All tile and no substance



Still a contender for the Best Sky Ever



Well, at least it looks warm

A LACK OF CLASS

Truly, the worst part about the game is the lame ass characters. Clerics with about five spells? No real god or deity or ethics, but some dodgy non capitalised chaos thing? The magician on a quest to avenge her dead dad? The adventurer at least whines about his father and the thief had no motivation I can understand. Out of preference, use the fighter. I'm pretty sure his is the worst dialogue.



The backgrounds are pretty and there are big full motion intros for the different characters but no eyeball kick beauty here.

Microcosmic

Where this game really takes off is the non-linear plot. You have probably heard games promise that before, but the way that the various plots and subplots are structured here you will find that this is probably about the closest you will get to free will in a game

microcosm. You can follow any series of clues and can investigate what you want when you want. Game events move in realtime, so if you don't do anything about saving a fair maiden, for instance, she'll die. That leaves you without a series of clues and contacts to work with. It's quite an interesting set up and one I would recommend to gamers without hesitation.

With one major exception. The dialogue in Arcatera is bloody atrocious: "How art thee, old buddy?", "Is that dost Okay?" The forced archaic English, especially in combination with the modern idiom is utterly ludicrous. Also, and this is something I've noticed with other games of European design, everything, including the evil monsters is very rounded and very smooth. It takes an edge of the overall design aesthetic of the game.

Ultimately, Arcatera has to be ruled a bit of a dud, I'm afraid. No way does it come up against the heavies of the genre like Planescape: Torment or Omikron. Its non-linear gameplay is indeed rather interesting, but in the context it's present - that of a tired RPG quest - it doesn't really matter. Without compelling graphics and teeth grindingly bad dialogue, there is no real reason to stick around unless you are a hardcore roleplayer hanging for a minor diversion from the usual sort of experience.

Christian Read

DETAILS

GENRE	Roleplaying
MULTIPLAYER	No
DEVELOPER	Westka Ent.
PUBLISHER	Ubi Soft
DISTRIBUTOR	Ubi Soft
AVAILABLE	Now
RATING	M
NEED	PII-233, 32Mb RAM, 8xCD
WANT	PII-300, 64Mb RAM

ONLINE

www.westka.com
The developer's site



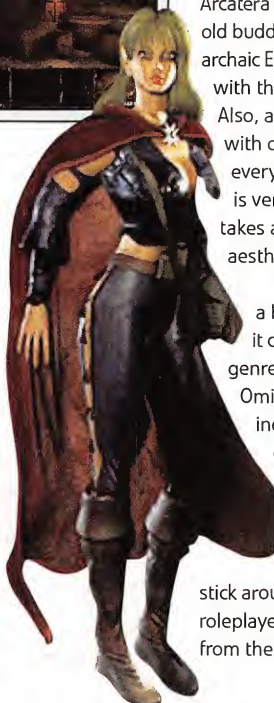
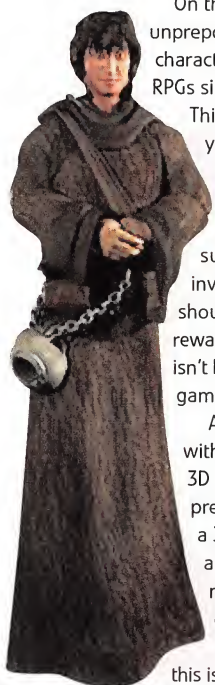
PCPP

FOR
■ The non-linear plot is different

AGAINST
■ Insane AI
■ Ludicrous dialogue
■ Lack of pacing

OVERALL
Thou hast been decreed to suck - or is it sucketh?

49%



TACHYON THE FRINGE

Logan's run takes him to the Fringe and back

DETAILS

GENRE

Space Sim

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (Novaworld, LAN, IPX)

DEVELOPER

Novalogic

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

DISTRIBUTOR

Electronic Arts

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

P-200, 32Mb RAM, 4xCD, 16Mb 3D Videocard (D3D, OpenGL)

WANT

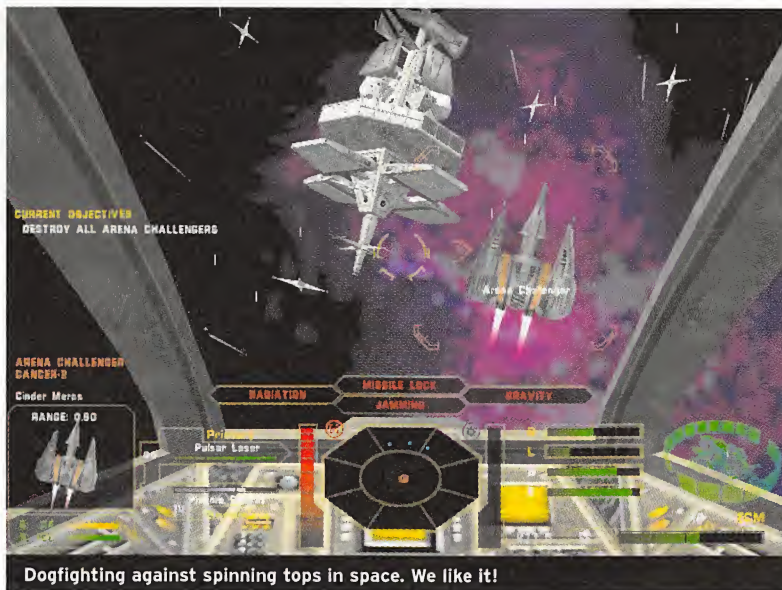
PII-350, 64Mb RAM



ONLINE

www.bruce-campbell.com

Bruce Campbell is the voice of Jake Logan, and long-time friend of legendary director Sam Raimi. You might remember him from such luminous artistic events as *Evil Dead*, *Evil Dead 2*, *Hudsucker Proxy*, *Maniac Cop*, *Xena*, and *Hercules*.



Dogfighting against spinning tops in space. We like it!

If you've had the opportunity to read the blurb or a preview on *Tachyon: The Fringe*, you would be excused for having a bit of a drool. On offer, apparently, are some stunning visuals, an evolving and participatory storyline, space combat, trading, a main character given voice by sardonic cult cool dude Bruce Campbell, open-ended gameplay, and a bucketload more to boot. It all sounds a little like *Tachyon* was all set to become a modern day *Elite*, doesn't it? Could it be?

It ain't the new *Elite*

Well, no. Developer Novalogic has instead produced a tightly scripted game where the evolving narrative takes precedence over open-ended, free shootin' and tradin' gameplay. This is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, *Tachyon* is a remarkably playable and enjoyable space sim that compares well with contemporaries such as *FreeSpace* and *Starlancer*. Just don't expect to be trawling through an entire galaxy and choosing where you want to go. Instead you'll be presented with a lovely and engaging narrative that focuses around a Han Solo-like character, Jake Logan.

As the game begins Logan has found himself on the fringe of known space (hence the game title) working small contracts for some megacorporations, which form the introductory missions for the game. Everything is going swell, until you become the scapegoat for a corporation screw up, and end up banished to the outer fringe, stripped of your ship and all your cool armaments. A few more missions kitted out in a crap ship and then you're presented with a choice. Do you attempt to work your way up the corporation GalSpan hierarchy, working exclusively for them? Or do you join the outcast freedom fighters, the Bora, who are fighting to own their own piece of space?

But it's still great

The way the game works is that there are a number of starbases at which you dock during the game to check out the job board, kit out your ship with the money you receive from completed missions, select your wingmen, and sometimes even play the pokies! There are usually three or four mission choices with varying degrees of difficulty (and remuneration), but this is nearly all the latitude that the game gives

everything is swell, until you become the scapegoat for a corporation screw up

you to make your own decisions. There are ancillary missions that you'll be given the opportunity to pick up along the way though, just for some variety. The catch is that to perform these missions you'll have to accept another Bora or GalSpan mission and then ignore it for a little bit whilst you jaunt off, which is a bit clumsy really.

Ship control feels just right, and though the enemy AI leaves a little to be desired (hint: make sure you select 'hard' level, anything else is just far too easy) dogfights are fairly well balanced. For most missions you're also given the option to take along a wingman for a cut of the proceeds. During the latter missions especially, the wingman should be a godsend; sadly, often he is not - it seemed just as likely for my wingman to accidentally hit me as an enemy ship, no matter what orders I gave him.

But these are really minor quibbles, and once you get used to them you'll have a whale of a time with *Tachyon*. The missions are nicely varied, including escort jobs, espionage, rescues, as well as the more standard 'go here, kill everything' style. Overall, *Tachyon: The Fringe* is an immensely satisfying game for both single and multiplayer, even if it's not the New *Elite*.

Gareth Jones

WHEN IS A MANUAL LIKE A BOOK?

Kudos to the Novalogic people who bothered to produce a large, interesting and worthy manual - an increasingly rare achievement. More than just your standard manual fare of 'back story and control key listing', *Tachyon's* "Guide to the Fringe" really helps to flesh out the game universe as well as inform you of what you need to know for the game in an entertaining fashion. Excellent job!



PCPP

FOR

- Immersive plot
- Lovely graphics
- Some excellent mission variety

AGAINST

- Too structured
- Limited 'trading' and exploring
- Dubious AI

OVERALL

A worthy contender in the space genre

84%

THE SIMS LIVIN' LARGE

Become a virtual game reviewer - see how much they don't get paid!

DETAILS

GENRE

Little People
Simulation

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Maxis

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

DISTRIBUTOR

Electronic Arts

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

P-233, 32Mb RAM,
4xCD, Original copy
of The Sims

WANT

PII-350, 64Mb RAM



The kids are strangely dismayed with their Xmas presents

ORIGINAL SIM

Ahh, how far we've come, eh? Anyone with a taste for nostalgia and a love of the venerable C64 should remember what was in many ways a precursor to The Sims - LCP or Little Computer Person. Your cute little character, Adam, was under your control and relied upon you to keep him fed, clean, intellectually satisfied and in good company. To get your attention he'd wander up to his study and type out a charming little note to you detailing his complaints.



He clearly floats her boat

ONLINE

www.thesims.com
Still a great place to visit thanks to Maxis' ongoing support for the game



www.thesimsresource.com
A vast repository of useful info and tidbits



www.somethingawful.com/articles/weekinsims/index.htm
A week in the life of Stabs and Porsche Felcher



PCPP

FOR

■ Lots of new things to play with
■ It'll rekindle interest in The Sims

AGAINST

■ More innovations would have been nice
■ Still too much micromanagement

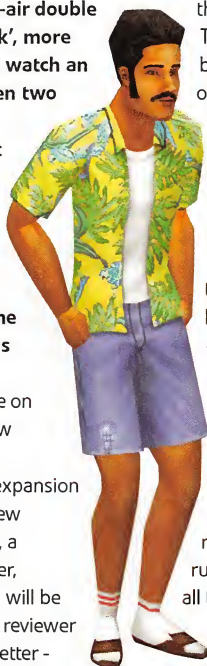
OVERALL

A good, solid add-on to a great game

88%

When The Sims was first released earlier this year, some very curious changes began to happen to many a gamer. Where once a hardcore Quake clanner would be violently asserting his or her 133t DM skills and waxing lyrical about that legendary mid-air double gib that was just 'siiiiiliick', more and more often one could watch an argument develop between two otherwise machismic gamers over whether that lamp really complemented the overall look of the bathroom. Or how much prettier that fuschia-shaded wallpaper made the dining room look. The Sims had arrived.

Now that interest may be on the wane, there's a fresh new injection of life to the game courtesy of the Livin' Large expansion pack. Wa-hey! There's five new career paths to rise through, a slacker, paranormalist, hacker, musician and journalist (you will be pleased to note that a game reviewer is one step ahead of a typesetter - thanks Maxis!). Though apart from some rather cool new uniforms it still doesn't make much difference what job you do in the game itself.



Kid chemistry

The real meat of the expansion pack is in the new items and home features. Always wanted to live in a dank gothic mansion? It's yours! Same goes for a funky futuristic style home, and there's plenty of useful items for those that revel in tackiness too.

There's also a bunch of new chairs, beds, desks, pictures, lamps, and so on to choose from - enough to keep the interior decorator in you happy for a good long while.

The new items aren't all just pretty to look at either - Maxis has noted the mean streak in players and catered to their wants with a variety of humorous and often disastrous objects. Take that antique lamp for instance. Hmm, a quick rub and suddenly the quintessential genie is summoned to grant your wishes! But, like the saying goes, be careful what you wish for; I don't want to spoil it for you, but really, you may want to save before rubbing. In fact, while you're exploring all the new objects you will want to save often, as the side effects can be devastating. Anyone with half a brain should be able to tell that giving a chemistry set to a child is a recipe for disaster - beware the evil twin! Of course, if all this is giving you the blues, just purchase

one of those nice sad down pictures - but uh-oh, if you're feeling sad the down will come to life and attempt to cheer you up. At 3am. While you are fast asleep...

Good vibrations

And that's just a sampling of what this expansion pack offers - there are also cool features like the ability to try talking the Grim Reaper out of taking your partner once s/he passes away, a telescope to look at the stars with (and to keep an eye out for aliens), robots that can be bought to help out with that pesky housework (I'm sorry Dave, I can't do that...), and even a vibrating bed so that your sims can (finally) consummate their passionate affair.

The only criticism I have of Livin' Large is really a criticism of The Sims itself: it's managing the minutiae of everyday life that really becomes annoying after a while. I was hoping that the feature set of Livin' Large might address this in some way (sims that go to the toilet themselves, or pick up a phone when it rings, and so on). Still, even though this expansion pack is just a heap of new objects, designs, implements and career paths, there's enough to keep any fan of The Sims happy for the weeks and months to come.

Gareth Jones



MECH COLLECTION

Below is some late night Mech Collection advertising...

DETAILS

GENRE

Action/Strategy

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-8 via LAN, modem)

DEVELOPER

FASA Interactive

PUBLISHER

Microprose

DISTRIBUTOR

Hasbro

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

P-200, 32Mb RAM, 240Mb HDD, 2Mb Videocard

WANT

PII-300, 64Mb RAM, 390Mb HDD

" MechWarrior 3 is the giant robot gaming experience for everyone! LAUGHTER, TEARS, HIGH-POWERED MACHINERY and DESTRUCTION!! GREAT for MUM after a hard day!!!

We'll also give you the EXPANSION PACK - PIRATE'S MOON - full of more THUNDEROUS ROBOTIC ANTICS! Educational for the kids!!

BUT WAIT! We're not done yet!! You also get the classic strategy of MechCommander Gold!!! Call in the next fifteen minutes and..."

I'll have guns with that

While we eagerly await MechWarrior 4, there's some bargains to be had in the mean time. MicroProse delivers a collection of some of the high points in the whole Mech experience. For the uninitiated, as a MechWarrior, you pilot various large, killing machines in the distant future to mash some other giants robots through various missions.

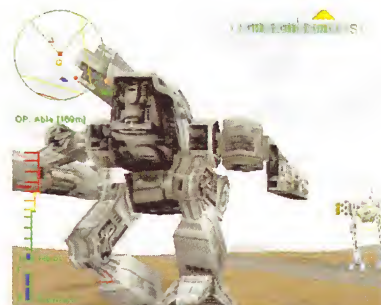
MechWarrior 3 and its expansion pack are the real winners in this collection - this is an attractive 3D action extravaganza that was stunning us about this time last year (91%,

PCPP#39). A great level of control, excitement and detail is evident - violence with extreme prejudice is the order of the day.

MechCommander Gold, while a solid upgrade of the original 3D isometric action/strategy, is looking decidedly dated and is really just here for strength in numbers.

A good buy if you were in a coma while the rest of us played MechWarrior 3 or have a machine that's looking a little dated. And you get a truly dope t-shirt as well. Winner!

John Dewhurst



The big butt of a big robot



Look closely and you'll see a face on that tower

PCPP

OVERALL
Great budget gaming but with little appeal for the die-hard Mech fan

69%

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET

Flight simming without a soul

DETAILS

GENRE

Modern Fighter Sim

MULTIPLAYER

1-24 (head-to-head only)

DEVELOPER

Digital Integration

PUBLISHER

Interplay

DISTRIBUTOR

Interplay

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G8

NEED

P-233, 64Mb RAM, 340Mb HDD, 4Mb Videocard (D3D)

WANT

PII-300, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb Videocard (D3D)

Maybe I've been spoilt by Jane's recent effort in the F/A-18 stakes, but Digital Integration's offering is a major disappointment. Despite being a solid flight sim, F/A-18E Super Hornet is overly complex and simply fails to deliver many of the features expected by today's armchair pilots. The money spent on high quality (if poorly acted) cutscenes would clearly have been better directed towards a decent training package, simplified documentation, and at least a stab at campaign and multiplayer options.

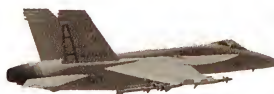


Straight through the goalposts!

In addition to the 20 alleged training missions (in which no training is provided!), 40 combat missions can be flown in the Barents Sea and Indian Ocean war zones. The Russians are at it again, and players are tasked with taking them on in a variety of air-to-air and air-to-ground missions, using the full range of weaponry available to the Super Hornet. No unified campaigns are available in the initial release, although they should be seen in the "Gold" version due to ship in the near future.

Faint praise

It's not all bad news. Super Hornet's cockpit detail is remarkable, with almost everything operable by mouse click, and the representation of carrier deck operations is as good as advertised. Similarly, the aircraft modelling is a beautiful sight to see - despite being let down by some very average ground detail. Weapons are also well simulated, and the mission planner is comprehensive and straightforward.



With so many good features, it's a shame that Digital Integration didn't finish it properly

Major Des McNicholas



PCPP

OVERALL
Despite some great technical achievements, this game seems dated and unfinished

63%

THANDOR

The 3D RTS bandwagon trundles past once more...



The sprint cars proved effective offensive units



What a bunch of weak-willed deserters!

HIPPIES OUT

Thandor features both resource types, country and western. Or to be more precise, Xenite and Tritium. Xenite deposits are gold in colour and provide the raw materials for building/unit construction and research, while Tritium is the fuel for your power plants - no hippy solar panels here by gum. This set up increases the difficulty of defending your holdings and adds an extra wrinkle to the strategy the player might use against their opponents.



Before: watch carefully as the leaves...



After: ...flutter in the gentle breeze

In a time yet to come, in a place not so far away, an Alien race known as the Galrath attempted to invade Earth's colonies, as well as those of other races, and were eventually defeated by an alliance of those same worlds. After a time the alliance became complacent, corrupt. Trains started derailing, buildings falling over and then came the Olympics.

Thandor is a no nonsense 3D realtime strategy title. If you have played Eidos' Warzone 2100 you may get the impression that Thandor is its sequel as the two titles are very similar in appearance and design. In fact it wouldn't surprise me at all to learn that some of the same developers worked on both games. Warzone, however, was much more fun.

Tim-berrr!

The game utilises a true 3D engine, but one that maintains a thirdperson perspective, but the camera can be manoeuvred extensively. The terrain is moderately interactive and the player has to deal with events like meteorite showers every once in a while. You should also be wary of the trees, they'll just stand there doing nothing until you kill them - then they'll fall over. Crafty buggers.

The 3D terrain allows Thandor to make use of line of sight and elevation rules, adding an extra tactical element to the game, and making control of certain areas on each game map an important aid to your cause. Research to find new weapons and buildings, and to improve the efficiency of your current ones, is done within most building types or in the

dedicated research facilities. Unlike Warzone 2100, unit types are automatically put together when new items become available and instantly come up on your construction menus.

Unfortunately, Thandor is let down by movement AI which makes your troops behave like an under 21's football team on the morning after a Grand Final victory. Even small groups of units become tangled up in themselves when you give them group movement orders and getting bigger vehicles through narrow has to be done one at a time.

If it weren't for this one frustrating problem, Thandor would be quite good. Alas, it falls short of being a truly memorable title and only just manages to poke its head above the level of mediocrity.

George Soropos

DETAILS

GENRE
3D Realtime Strategy

MULTIPLAYER
Yes (1-5 via TCP/IP, LAN)

DEVELOPER
Planet 4

PUBLISHER
JoWood

DISTRIBUTOR
Infogrames

AVAILABLE
Now

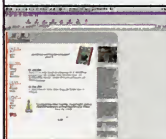
RATING
TBC

NEED
PII-266, 32Mb RAM, 4Mb 3D Videocard

WANT
PII-500, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D Videocard

ONLINE

www.thandor.com.de
Download new units and maps - a la Total Annihilation - from JoWood's Thandor homepage



PCPP

FOR
■ Straightforward gameplay
■ Nice gameworld
■ Good for beginners

AGAINST
■ Clumsy pathfinding
■ Generally poor AI

OVERALL
A neat effort only undermined by a few flaws

69%

EVERQUEST RUINS OF KUNARK

Scott Lyons is an Evercrack addict

DETAILS

GENRE

Massively Multiplayer
Virtual Reality

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Verant Interactive

PUBLISHER

Sony

DISTRIBUTOR

Sony

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

P-200, 64Mb RAM,
2xCD, 8MB 3D
Video card (D3D),
28.8k Modem

WANT

PII-266, 128Mb RAM,
4xCD



Our favourite Everquest screenshot. For obvious reasons



Kneel, you insolent creature, and quit making wisecracks about my tight trousers

ONLINE

www.everquest.com
The official website
for Everquest



PCPP

HOW TO:

Please send your
review to
reader_review@pcp-owerplay.com.au

REMEMBER:

All of the reviews
should be 500
words in length and
contain Details,
Online and a Score

98%

To be able to quest for ever in an massive online multiplayer world - that's the goal of Everquest. Don't doubt there's a danger here, not in the game so much, as to everyday life, social interaction and work in general. The problem is that time passes so quickly when you're involved in another world. And this world is so beautiful, big and interactive.

Party time

I start off solo. Meet another fighter and team up my wizard with him for protection. We start to dominate the orcs' camp and during the next hour or so of damage dealing and carnage we start to chat. The odd joke, a little information regarding a quest, compliments on the gear we are carrying or rescuing each other's bacon. Before you know it you have a camaraderie happening with someone who is likely on the other side of the world and who you really don't know from a bar of soap. You add them to your friends list. You'll see them around again. When you do you may team up with them or just compare notes on your respective progress. You may end up in a guild together battling other guilds or partying hard with other guild members in an inn.

It's the multiplayer and grouping options that make Everquest really shine. Playing in a large party has never been so well reflected.

Oh, it can be chaotic, but if everyone knows their roles and plays by the team plan it can be nothing short of exhilarating. Let the thief hide and sneak in from behind for the backstab. Realise that the warriors must protect the spell casters and form a protective barrier. Creatures will target the casters as they deal huge damage and yet are ninety pound weaklings! Clerics and enchanters become the hub of any group with their healing and buffing abilities. The leader is responsible for inviting new party members or divvying out the spoils of war. It's great fun.

However, my wizard has had some run-ins with other characters. You quickly learn the etiquette of this game by making stupid mistakes. Don't, for example, run to another character for help with eight orcs chasing you, baying for your blood - not without warning them anyway. Being responsible for the accidental death of someone else does not get a friendship off to a good start! Don't shout all the time as not everyone is interested in what you have to say.

Power trip

If you remember a few simple things then you start to notice something amazing happening. The characters in this world are almost universally "nice" to each other. They will help you out when you're in a bind, lend you money and food, rescue you from the

jaws of that crocodile or shark, or happily show you around a new city introducing you to its denizens.

This is all well and good, but what is so addictive with this game? Why is it nicknamed EverCrack and why am I a junkie? It's certainly not a perfect game, as quite a lot of what happens is unrealistic (ie. the zones in the game have edges where it is safe to sit and recuperate).

But I think I know the answer. It's the quest for POWER. The sheer awe that is generated by a high level character and the power that exudes from them is enough to fill everyone who meets them with ENVY. You'll want this power and want it BAD. To be able to waltz in and, with a flick of the wrist, leave the battle field a smoking and charred ruin and a group of lower level characters grovelling in awe. With each additional level you gain you come closer to this goal and your skills become more rounded.

Eventually you will be able to walk the earth secure knowing that you are the top of the food chain and that precious little can challenge you. And when you reach those lofty heights - and it will take a LONG time - what do you do? Well, start again of course, this time with a troll warrior. Such is the world of Everquest. It's waiting for you, so come and join us.

Scott Lyons



**A comprehensive guide to computer and
video gaming, Covering all games released in
Australia, and much, much more...**

- PC
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- PLAYSTATION
- DREAMCAST
- NINTENDO 64
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- PLAYGUIDES
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HYPER»

AUSTRALIA'S NO.1 VIDEO GAMES MAG

SCORE LIST

The past year in gaming. This month: most memorable adventure games

GAME NAME SCORE # ISSUE

Deus Ex

DEVELOPER: Ion Storm

PUBLISHER: Eidos

DISTRIBUTOR: Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"From the interior of an enormous 747 to the abandoned New York subway, the game's locations are realised in uniformly exceptional detail.

Complementing this is the bewildering and diverse array of objects with which Denton can interact. This is a world just buzzing with things to touch and fiddle around with."

98% in PCPP #51



Deus Ex

12 O'Clock High	68	#46
Abomination	81	#44
Age of Empires 2	94	#42
Age of Wonders	84	#46
Airport Inc.	42	#48
Akuma: Demons spawn	50	#47
Alien Nations	75	#52
Allegiance	81	#50
Alpha Centauri: Alien X-fire	83	#45
Amerzone	68	#42
Army Men Air Tactics	65	#50
Army Men In Space	66	#48
Asheron's Call	88	#50
Atlantis II	78	#50
Baldur's Gate: Sword Coast	76	#41
Baldur's Gate II	93	#53
Battlecruiser 3000	72	#50
Battlezone 2	85	#48
Beetle Crazy Cup	74	#49
Braveheart	86	#42
C&C Tiberian Sun	94	#41
Civ: Test of Time	81	#41

Drakan

DEVELOPER: Surreal

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis

DISTRIBUTOR: GT Interactive

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"It's hardly surprising to discover that combat is decidedly cool. A devastating array of fighting moves are easily executed and there's a healthy range of weapons with which Rynn can arm herself. With the addition of Arokh, Drakan is blessed with a degree of variety that puts its more generic companions to shame."

84% in PCPP #43

Clans	48	#42
Codename: Eagle	64	#46
Cricket 2000	70	#51
Croc 2	78	#48
Crusaders of Might & Magic	75	#50
Cutthroats	67	#43
Daikatana	67	#52
Dark Reign 2	89	#51
Darkstone	68	#42
Delta Force 2	78	#46
Descent 3: Mercenaries	65	#47
Deus Ex	98	#51
Diablo II	89	#53
Dick Johnson V8 Challenge	45	#46
Dino Crisis	66	#53
Disciples	81	#43
Dogs of War	72	#51
Dracula	58	#47
Drakan	84	#43
Driver	71	#43
Dungeon Keeper 2	90	#41
Earth 2150	91	#53
Enemy Engaged	91	#50
Evolve	71	#50
F/A 18 Hornet	91	#47
FA Prem. League Stars	71	#42
FIFA 2000	88	#45
Fighting Steel	80	#41
Final Fantasy VIII	77	#47
Flight Unlimited III	89	#43

Gabriel Knight III

DEVELOPER: Sierra

PUBLISHER: Sierra

DISTRIBUTOR: Dataflow

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"This is the stuff of Knights Templar, Cathars and the demon Asmodeus. It's complex, lurid with history and all steeped in rich accuracy. GK3 does not boost gaming into bold and strange new directions, but it provides a thought-provoking and memorable story that resonates long after you have witnessed the final scene."

87% in PCPP #44

Fly!	85	#42
Flying Heroes	76	#51
Force 21	90	#42
Force Commander	58	#49
Fox Sports NBA 2000	56	#44
Freespace 2	95	#44
Gabriel Knight III	87	#44
Gorky 17	65	#47
Grand Prix World	83	#49
Grand Prix 3	88	#53
Grand Theft Auto 2	84	#44
Ground Control	90	#52

Guardians of Darkness	30	#41
Gulf War: Desert Hammer	55	#45
Gunship!	89	#50
Half-Life: Opposing Force	90	#45
HOMM III: Armageddon's Blade	70	#45
Hidden and Dangerous	88	#41
H & D: Fight for Freedom	45	#46
Homeworld	95	#41
Icwind Dale	80	#52
I-War: Defiance	72	#44
Imperium Galactica 2	92	#46
Indiana Jones & Infernal Machine	69	#45
Interstate '82	60	#47
Invictus	51	#48

Indiana & Infernal Machine

DEVELOPER: Lucasarts

PUBLISHER: Lucasarts

DISTRIBUTOR: Metro

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

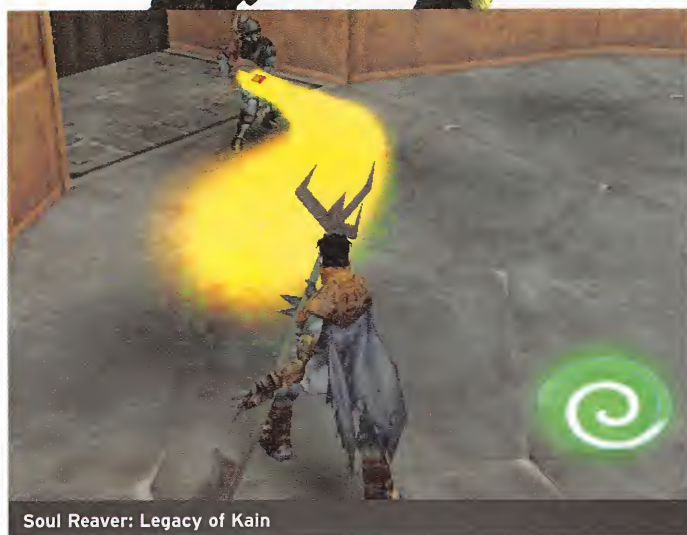
"Indy climbs and clambers and lashes the whip and falls and crawls in a very realistic motion. The game is far better in this area than the other adventure games of its sort. Unfortunately, while this game is surely pretty, it really just does not have the guts of a classic"

69% in PCPP #45



GOLD AWARD
90-94

PLATINUM AWARD
95-100



Soul Reaver: Legacy of Kain

Omikron: Nomad Soul

DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream

PUBLISHER: Eidos

DISTRIBUTOR: Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"If Kay'l dies at any point, your soul will be transferred into the body of the first person who touches his corpse. Other titles have tried to meld together a diverse array of genres, but Quantic Dream has trumped everyone else with The Nomad Soul."

93% in PCPP #44

Jagged Alliance 2	89	#42
Jane's USAF	86	#44
KA-52 Alligator	65	#48
King of Dragon Pass	31	#52
Kingpin	86	#41
Klingon Academy	83	#53
Lemmings Revolution	70	#51
Links 2000	79	#44
M25 Racer	25	#45
Madden NFL 2000	84	#44
Majesty	79	#49
Man of War II	15	#40
Martian Gothic	57	#50
Maximum Flight	78	#52
MDK 2	84	#52
Messiah	89	#48
Metal Fatigue	78	#53
Mig Alley	92	#42
Might & Magic VIII	55	#49
Millennium Racer	70	#50
Motocross Madness 2	85	#51
MS Flight Sim 2000	84	#44

Nascar Revolution	35	#48
Nascar Road Racing	28	#41
Nations: Fighter Command	82	#44
NBA Inside Drive 2000	68	#46
NBA Live 2000	90	#45
Need for Speed: High Stakes	89	#41
Need For Speed: Porsche 2000	75	#52
Nerf Arena	70	#46
NHL Championship 2000	78	#46
Nocturne	79	#46
Nox	83	#48
Omikron: Nomad Soul	93	#44
Operation Art of War 2	84	#42
Pandora's Box	68	#47
Panzer Elite	85	#46
Planescape: Torment	91	#46
Pharaoh	88	#45
Phoenix	64	#46
Prince of Persia 3D	65	#43
Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey	88	#47
Puma Street Soccer	75	#46

Soul Reaver

DEVELOPER: Crystal Dynamics

PUBLISHER: Eidos

DISTRIBUTOR: Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"Raziel needs to feed on others in order to survive, even if it means taking the lives of innocent people. It's an unhappy means to a hopefully happy end, and Crystal Dynamics have done an admirable job of conveying and fleshing out this inherent moral dilemma."

84% in PCPP #43

Tomb Raider 4

DEVELOPER: Core Design

PUBLISHER: Eidos

DISTRIBUTOR: Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"The game justly rewards players who take the time to devise alternate solutions to problems, instead of rushing into a situation with guns blazing. Puzzles, too, require a lot more thought to complete, making the game more challenging on the whole."

89% in PCPP #43

Quake III: Arena	93	#45
Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	92	#44
Rally Championship 2000	88	#45
Rayman 2	89	#45
Re-Volt	82	#41
Revenant	82	#45
Rising Sun	82	#48
Rogue Spear	92	#44
Rollcage II	80	#50
R'coaster Tyc: Added Attractions	81	#45
Septerra Core	84	#47
Seven Kingdoms 2	86	#44
Shadow Company	74	#44
Shadow Watch	65	#49
Shadow Man	61	#41
Shogun: Total War	92	#50
The Sims	90	#47
Skydive!	12	#42
Slave Zero	55	#47
Soldier of Fortune	86	#49
Soul Reaver: Legacy Of Kain	81	#43
Soulbringer	80	#51
South Park Rally	41	#47
Spec Ops 2	60	#46
Speed Demons	55	#47
Starlancer	93	#49
Star Trek: Armada	56	#49
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	69	#46

Star Trek: Starfleet Command	87	#43
SU-27 Flanker 2.0	83	#44
Swat 3	90	#46
Sydney 2000	85	#52
System Shock 2	98	#42
Theocracy	76	#49
The Wheel of Time	84	#45
Thief Gold	96	#45
Thief II: The Metal Age	95	#49
Theme Park World	80	#45
Tiger Woods 2000	84	#49
Tomb Raider: Last Revelation	89	#43
Traitor's Gate	78	#44
UEFA Manager	79	#51
Ultima Online	68	#48
Ultima IX: Ascension	70	#45
Unreal: Return to Na Pali	72	#41
Unreal Tournament	94	#45
Urban Chaos	85	#46
Vampire: The Masquerade	82	#52
Wartorn	78	#53
Wild Wild West	65	#51
World Manager	34	#48

Ultima IX: Ascension

DEVELOPER: Origin

PUBLISHER: EA

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"There aren't enough adjectives in a thesaurus to adequately describe the immersive qualities and sumptuous details of Ascension's environments. Sadly, the bugs that plague Ascension from the outset, and the game's appalling performance on even the most powerful of PC's, makes it impossible to recommend."

70% in PCPP #45

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IN HINDSIGHT...

Dark Reign 2



WE SPOKE TO PANDEMIC STUDIOS' GREG BORRUD AND ANDREW PAYNE ABOUT THEIR FINELY-HONED, EVER-CHANGING FUTURISTIC RTS



Pandemic's main men were only too happy to apprise us of the trials and tribulations associated with developing a 3D strategy game. They also talked at length about their greatest achievements, and gave us an inside edge on the directions they plan to take in the near future.

PCPP: How much did *Dark Reign 2* change during development? Or how close to its original design document did it remain?

Greg Borrud: (laughs) I think we kept the names of a few units the same, but the original design document differed greatly from the finished product. We had to make several major decisions along the way to change fundamental design aspects in order to make *Dark Reign 2* more accessible to RTS game players and remain within that core genre.

Andrew Payne: Aside from the unit names, the only other aspect that remained true to the original concept was the graphics. There was an especially insightful phrase in the document that said, "The graphics will be really cool" (grins). In some ways the direction we took in creating *DR2* was influenced by changes in technology. When we first started *Dark Reign 2*, we thought that we couldn't make a classic RTS game in full 3D, so we looked at making a more tactically-oriented game with an emphasis on only a few units. But that wasn't the kind of game we really wanted to make - we wanted to make *Dark Reign 2*. It took us quite a while to develop the technology that would



True 3D terrain affords considerable advantage to units who gain the high ground

enable us to make a full 3D RTS game. Part of that came from Intel's Multi Resolution Mesh technology, which we worked with them to develop. The MRM technology does a huge amount for our game - without it we couldn't have anywhere near the level of detail that our units have. Being able to zoom right in and see individual fingers flexing on a unit wouldn't be possible without MRM.

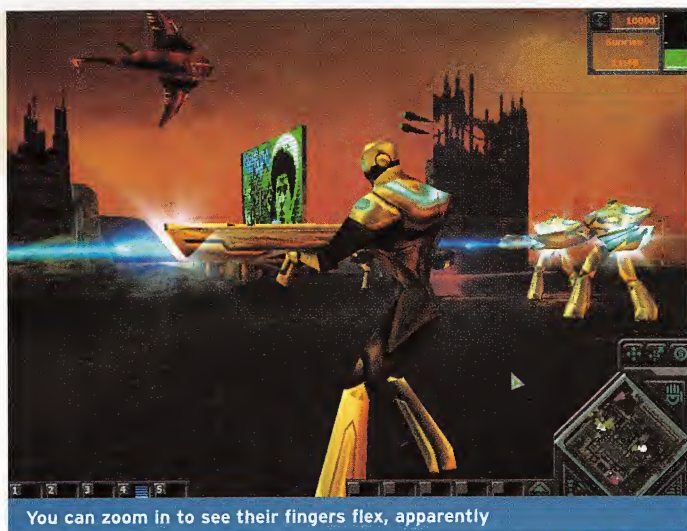
PCPP: Did *Dark Reign 2*'s development schedule run more or less smoothly than you anticipated at the start of the project?

GB: It took longer than we initially anticipated. It took about two-and-a-half years to develop the game, and generally went very smoothly. The transition from 2D to 3D definitely took a lot longer than we had predicted. Most of these 2D to 3D problems came from a design standpoint - how far do you take the concept, how much do you have to do to really take advantage of 3D, and at what point does your game stop being an RTS and become some other iteration? Having developed *Battlezone* and *Battlezone 2*, we also ran the risk of inadvertently making

Dark Reign 2 more like those titles, and less like a sequel to the original *Dark Reign*. We tried several different things, and eventually nailed down exactly what we wanted to do with the game about a year ago.

PCPP: In terms of plot and unit design, how much research was conducted during development of the game?

GB: Our designers are all very well-read, so they spent a lot of time gleaning information from various sources. Much of the technology portrayed in *Dark Reign 2* is a



combination of typical science fiction material, technology that's being researched by scientists and may some day become a reality, and some elements of pure fantasy.

AP: But, no matter how implausible the technology seemed, our Lead Designer always had a detailed explanation for how it functioned!

PCPP: Which aspects of the game are you most proud of?

AP: I'm really proud of all of it! I'm especially proud of what the designers managed to achieve.

GB: I'm so proud of Dark Reign 2's multiplayer setup. The way we have left it so open to modification is fantastic. But, by the same token, I am proud of the single player campaign. It's so immersive, and the balance between the two factions is almost flawless.

AP: Personally, I love going online and taking on the fans. Having played the game for months on end, I thought I would be virtually unbeatable, but I was recently trounced by a player who used a strategy I had never even considered! There is a way to counter that strategy, so I will be able to deal with it if I come up against it again, but that incident really made me aware of the overwhelming number of strategies players can use to achieve their goals. That's something else I am extremely proud of.

PCPP: What can we expect to see down the track in terms of patches, expansions or sequels?

GB: Whether or not we create an expansion pack or a sequel is really up to Activision, but we do plan on providing a lot of after-market support. Supporting the Dark Reign 2 community is a huge priority for us, and that's something we anticipate will extend the life of our game for



months to come. So we're releasing new multiplayer maps on a weekly basis, and adding neat new features that grant the player increased control over the camera, and allow them to play mp3s from within the game. We'll also be creating an extensive series of mods that I'm sure our hardcore fans will appreciate.

PCPP: What's next for Pandemic?

GB: What we have here is a game that we're all really proud of. But, almost more importantly, we have a phenomenal RTS game engine that I would argue is the best one out there. It has been so efficiently engineered by Andrew and the other three programmers, that we can now create all different types of RTS games simply by altering certain components within the 3D environment. In this regard, creating the engine from scratch has paid dividends. Unfortunately we can't really discuss anything specific with regards to future projects, but we'll be moving into development of PlayStation2 and X-Box titles, and we're looking to open up a development studio in Brisbane.

PCPP: Thanks very much for your time, guys. We're looking forward to Pandemic's next release and wish you the best of luck in setting up your Australian division.

GB & AP: You're welcome, and thank you for your support.

SECOND TAKE...



Here is an excerpt from a conversation I had with my brother the day I brought home a copy of Dark Reign 2:

ME: Look! Dark Reign 2!

BROTHER: Uh-huh. What is it?

ME: It's um... an RTS. But! Look! 3D! Ooohh!

BROTHER: Another RTS?

ME: But it looks so good!

BROTHER: But it's still an RTS... (crestfallen silence)

ME: I'm going to hit you with a pipe.

Now, if you're like my brother, you're probably asking yourself: "Where did all the profanity go?" But, if you're a gamer with some DR2 experience, you should be asking: "Does that potentially violent dialogue tell us something about Dark Reign 2? Something we perhaps missed?"

Well, the answer to that question is YES. While bedazzled by the spectacular visuals in Pandemic's RTS, I - and many others - missed one simple fact: it's still an RTS.

This, of course, isn't to say that DR2 is a bad game - it's a great game. But it isn't the revolutionary product that Activision and many of the gaming press have touted it to be. It is, however, an exceedingly good RTS with some great units and a good story.

And boy, it sure looks purty.

Daniel Staines





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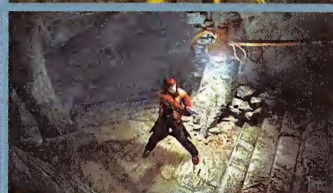
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Tech

THE SILICON STATE OF THE ART



As any PC owner knows, a well-oiled speedy PC is imperative to enjoy the latest games. In light of this, we've done a major overhaul of the tech section - starting this month, we've increased it's size and done a much-needed design overhaul. Tech has been in a state of flux over the past few months, and finally we've arrived at a design we're rather happy with. Cheers, Shon and Ashley. Onto the obligatory manifesto. Each month we'll serve up an expanded assortment of PC news, hardware reviews and tech features, while remembering what it's all about: playing games at ludicrously high framerates. We're confident that the experienced crew here - Seb is a systems analyst, ninja hacker and computer science honours student - can provide you with all the info you need to have a truly wicked PC experience without all the boring stuff. Anyway, less talk, more content...! hughns@next.com.au

Intel Pentium 4 Previewed

THE FOURTH GENERATION PENTIUM PROCESSOR MAKES AN APPEARANCE

At the IDF Show last month, Intel finally unveiled the much anticipated Pentium 4 processor. The Pentium 4 will be fully compatible with existing 32-bit applications and operating systems, and Intel release chips later this year with initial speeds in the 1.4GHz range.

In the past year, AMD has been gaining increasing market share. One of the principle reasons for such success has been the radical design of the Athlon processor: unlike the competition, the latest AMD K7-based processors use a relatively new design. On the other hand, Intel's flagship model, the Pentium III, remains limited by the 5-year old architecture. Even with the Coppermine's new 0.18 micron manufacturing process, Intel is having a hard time pushing out a sufficient supply of 1GHz+ chips. Unlike the Athlon, the P6 architecture can't scale to higher speeds with ease. The Pentium III is expected to reach a maximum of 1.2-1.3 GHz, but that isn't expected until Intel moves to a 0.13 micron fabrication line. With the P6 architecture entering its twilight years, it's about time that a new core was released.

Design Improvements

Unsurprisingly, Intel has named its latest desktop CPU the Pentium 4. Originally known as Willamette, the processor features an awesomely complex design. The Pentium 4 squeezes 42 million transistors onto 1 chip, up from 28 million



Intel's Aussie CEO, David Bolt, is clearly pleased with the news

on the Pentium III. With cavalier disregard for cliché, Intel has dubbed this new internal design the NetBurst Architecture (Don't you just love marketing?). With new performance enhancing features, the Intel 'NetBurst' micro-architecture will form the foundation for the next several years of x86 processors.

The most important feature of the NetBurst micro-architecture is Hyper Pipelined Technology. Essentially, this refers to a 20-stage pipeline that the Pentium 4 will use. In comparison, this is twice as deep as the 10 stage pipelining used in the P6 core. A longer pipeline has many advantages. Primarily, the 20-stage pipeline will allow the Pentium 4 to hit higher clockspeeds without a core shrink - the first batch of Pentium 4 processors will use a 0.18 micron process, but the line is

expected to move to 0.13 at the beginning of next year. Intel's new chip will initially run at 1.4GHz, or 1.4billion cycles per second. With the 0.13 micron die shrink, the Pentium 4 should move well beyond the 2GHz mark. For both Intel and AMD, raw clock speed is very important - ignoring more important factors, much of the ignorant public base computer purchasing decisions purely upon the MHz rating.

The Pentium 4 adds SSE2 (Streaming SIMD Extensions 2) to the core, consisting of seventy-six new SIMD instructions and enhancements to sixty-eight integer SIMD instructions. SSE2 extends MMX and SSE technology, and is extremely useful for Multimedia and AI intensive operations. Games and voice recognition will thrive under SSE2. We can't wait to see SSE2 supported under the new Nvidia drivers...

i850 Chipset

Of note, the Pentium 4 is *not* backwards compatible with the BX, 820e or 815e chipsets. This means that upgraders will need to fork out for a new motherboard. For the moment, the Intel i850 (Tehama) chipset is the only solution for Pentium IV owners. Using a new PGA Socket W with 423 pins, the i850 includes some nifty new features: the system bus operates at a staggering 400MHz, (quad-pumped 100MHz),

Chip Recall

INTEL BACKTRACKS ON FASTEST PIII

Chip giant Intel has now confirmed that the 1.13GHz Pentium III has major issues - it has now recalled the part, which won't be re-released for some time. George Alfs, a PR representative at Intel has confirmed that they have 'found marginalities' in the processor. This is a significant blow to Intel's floundering credibility - for the time being, the AMD 1.1GHz (available in quantity) will remain the fastest x86 processor available. It also highlights a more serious issue, with critics concerned that the chip maker is sacrificing quality in order to rush processors to market.



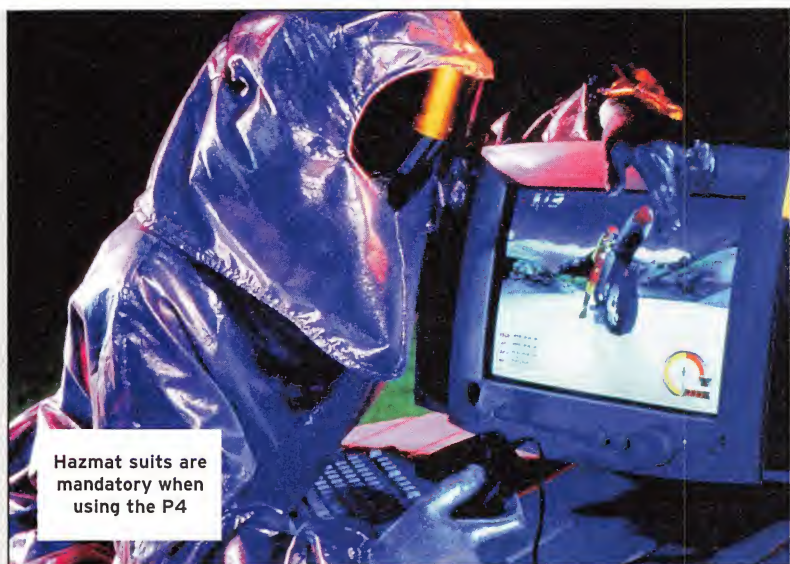
So Sue Me

AND IN THE BLUE CORNER...

The past month has witnessed a slew of lawsuits within the ultra-competitive computer industry. On the 28th of August, Nvidia commenced legal action against 3dfx, claiming its competitor has infringed upon many of its patents. The suit claims that 3dfx products (ever since the Voodoo3) violate five patents, all of which involve the I/O subsystem.

In similar news, Intel has slapped a patent infringement suit on rival chipset specialist VIA. The suit alleges that VIA has incorporated patented Intel technology into the original KX133 Athlon chipset.

Micron, a large Taiwanese memory manufacturer is suing RAMBUS Inc for alleged antitrust violations and bogus patent claims. In addition, Micron's move has emboldened Hyundai, another DRAM manufacturer, to sue RAMBUS. Both companies consider this a pre-emptive legal strike against RAMBUS Inc, who are expected to file patent infringement claims against both companies.



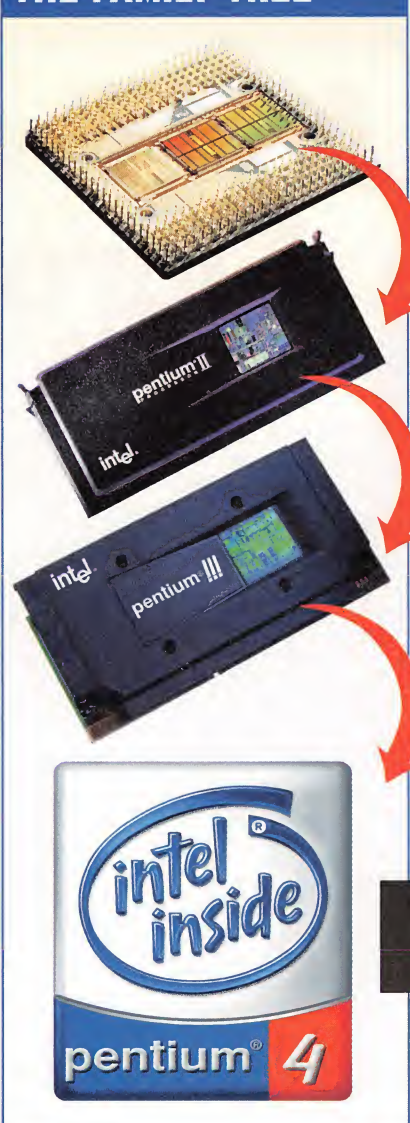
allowing data transfer at speeds of up to 3.2 Gb per second. In comparison, current Pentium III systems use a 133MHz system bus.

Sadly, a Front Side Bus of 400MHz forces the i850 to utilise RAMBUS PC800 memory. Although extremely expensive, RAMBUS in a dual-channel configuration (like the i840) can be very speedy. The increased bandwidth of RAMBUS will be a better solution for the Pentium 4 than it ever was for the Pentium III i820 combo - not only is the Pentium 4 bus in synch with the RAMBUS channel, but a dual-channel interface will significantly increase available bandwidth. The i850 also includes an integrated ATA/100 controller for high speed hard drive. Interestingly enough, the i850 is the first motherboard chipset we've seen that requires a large heatsink to operate.

Potential Performance

Although we're yet to benchtest the Pentium 4, it has impressive 'on-paper' specifications. The decision to use RAMBUS memory exclusively instead of cheaper DDR-SDRAM is distressing - as it stands, the Pentium 4 will only be a viable solution for the very wealthy and those demanding workstation level performance. We hope that Intel or VIA will release a consumer level chipset (Brookdale, anyone?) in the not so distant future. In any case, we don't really see the Pentium 4 taking over the mainstream from the Pentium III until the release of the 0.13 Northwood core and a reduction in the cost of RDRAM. AMD's new Mustang core at 1.5GHz with DDR SDRAM should compete very well clock for clock with the P4, and at a significantly lower price.

THE FAMILY TREE



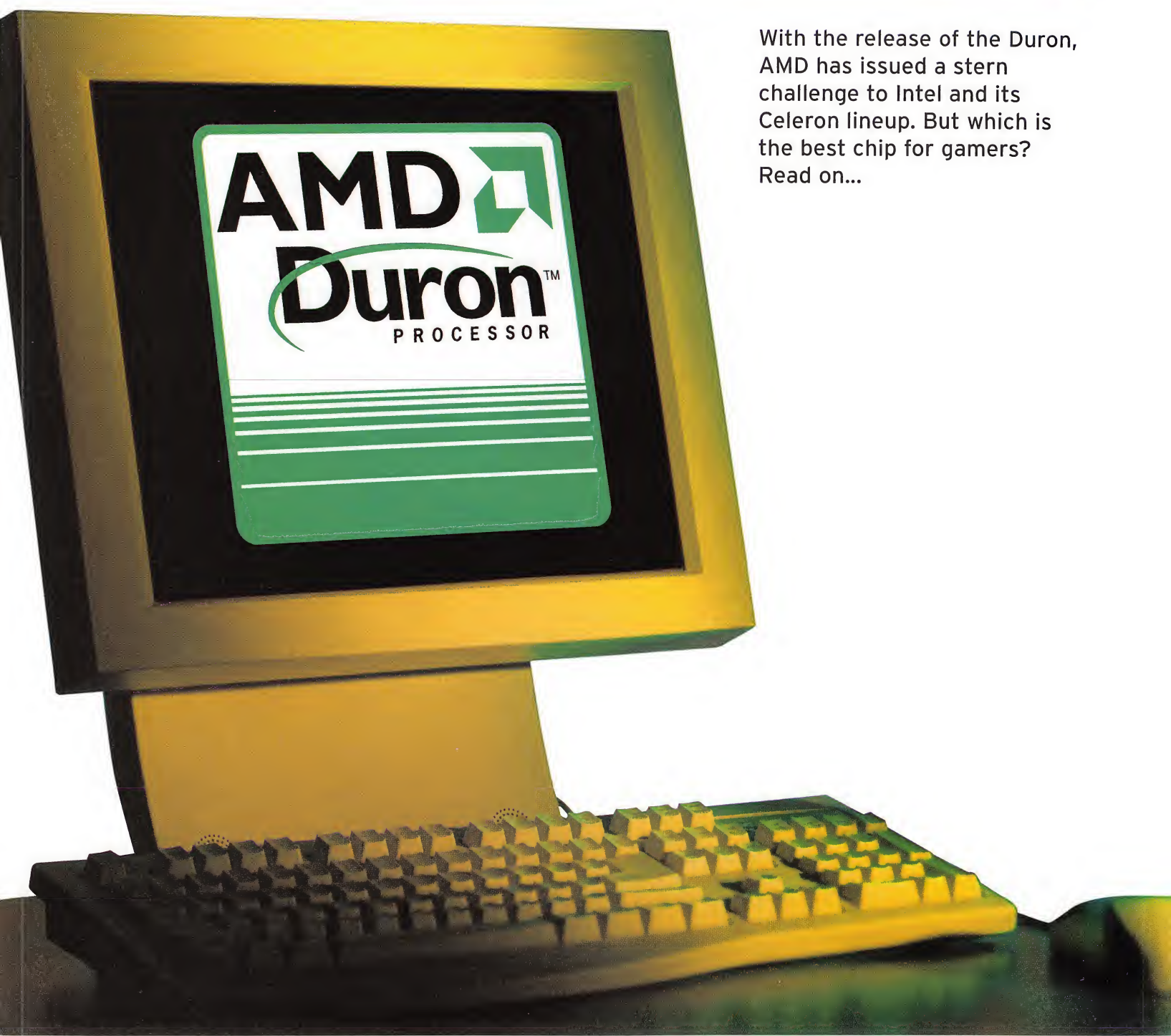
The P4 chip is so secret, only this logo is available

Duron vs. Celeron: CPU Deathmatch

ENTRY LEVEL CPUS COMPARED

by Hugh Norton-Smith

With the release of the Duron, AMD has issued a stern challenge to Intel and its Celeron lineup. But which is the best chip for gamers? Read on...



The AMD headquarters - a marvel of modern landscaping techniques



When Intel released the Celeron line of low-cost CPUs in 1998, the market sector literally exploded as consumers flocked to the cheaper, yet slightly less powerful chips. In fact, it was the introduction of the Celeron which prompted many PC manufacturers to release sub-US\$1,000 PCs. While the slim profit margin from value processors can't match the plump profits that high-end CPUs rack up for manufacturers, they make up for this discrepancy through the sheer weight of sales. Even AMD, who has aimed the mega-successful Athlon at the high-end workstation and performance market, has now released a low-end value oriented processor line to compete with the Celeron.

The present finds us with two low price CPUs at nearly identical price points and core MHz speeds, battling it out for the same key market space. What, then, is our official recommendation for budget PC builders?

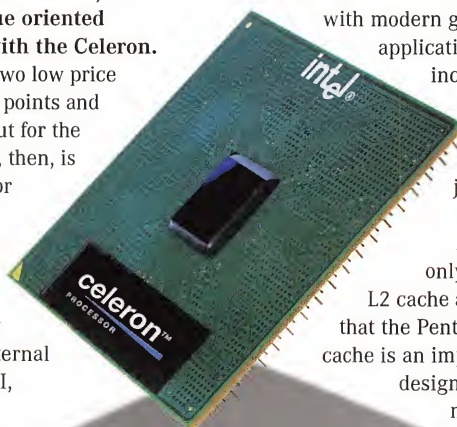
Celeron Introduced

Using the updated Coppermine128 core, the new Celeron offers an identical internal architecture to the Pentium III, including the adoption of the

PIII's SSE SIMD instructions and a 256-bit Advanced Transfer Cache. However, there are two important differences between the two processors: the Celeron is crippled by a lower front side bus (FSB) speed, and a smaller internal L2 cache.

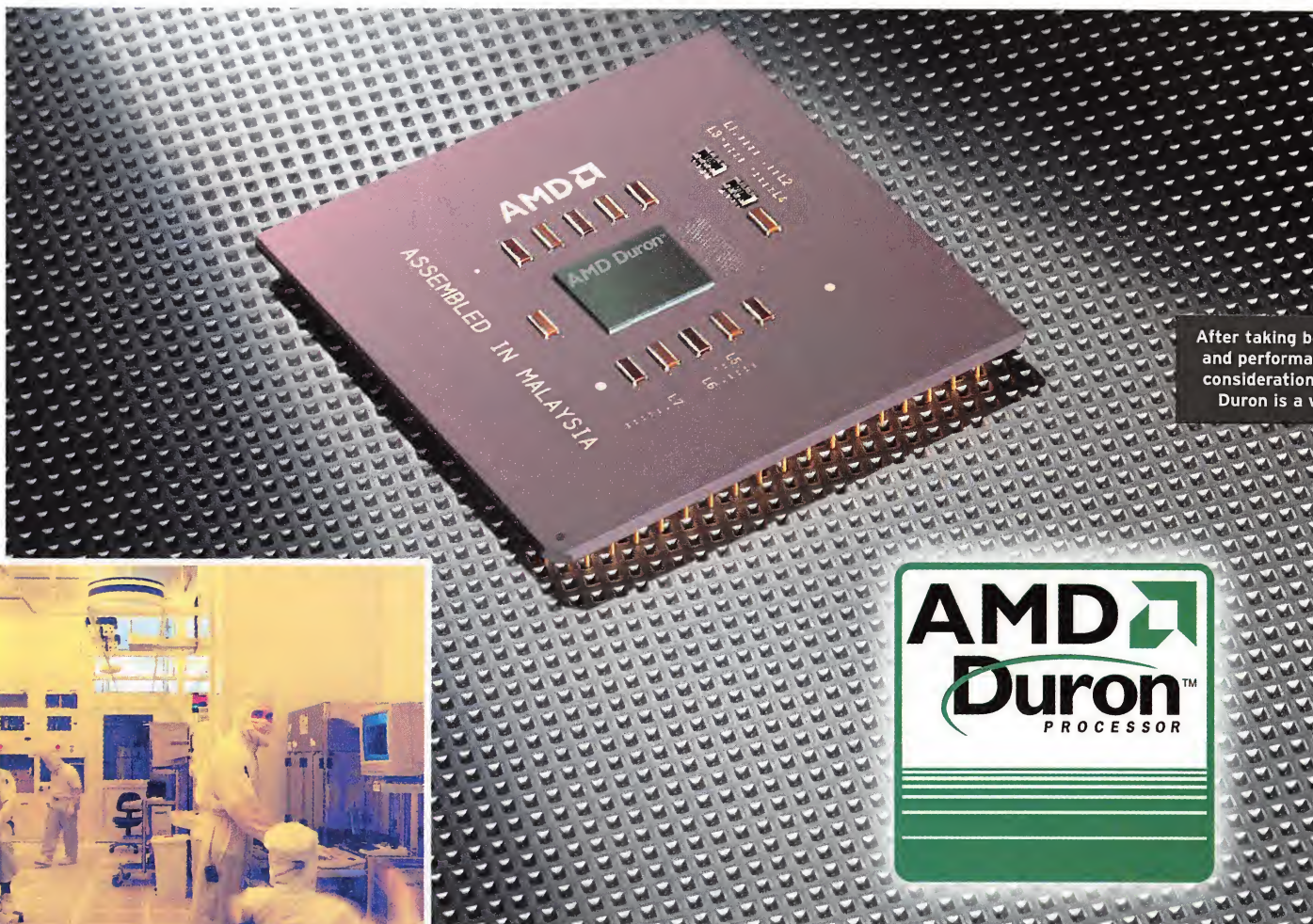
Instead of the 133MHz system bus speeds that the Pentium III uses, Celeron CPUs are limited to the restrictive 66MHz bus speed. It's worth noting that the Celeron lineup has been using the 66MHz bus speed since its inception in 1998 - while a 66MHz FSB may have been sufficient when used in conjunction with an ancient 266MHz processor, it does a disservice to a modern 700+MHz CPU. Certainly,

with modern games and applications placing increasing strains on system bandwidth, a 66MHz-bus speed just doesn't do the job anymore. Also, the Celeron only features half the L2 cache amount (128KB) that the Pentium III uses. L2 cache is an important part of chip design - cache acts as a middle man



Intel's chief, Andy Grove, announces the Celeron II

between your processor and your main memory subsystem. Instead of wasting time going directly to the memory for a data request, your CPU can request data directly from either the Level 1 or Level 2 cache. By keeping the comparatively tardy system memory out of the equation, many frequently repeated tasks (many of which are found in business applications, such as Office applications, and even your OS alone) are sped up considerably.



Duron Introduced

The AMD Duron is to the Athlon what the Celeron is to the Pentium III. As with Intel, AMD is returning to a socket-based processor, Socket A aka Socket 462. Sadly this signals the demise of Socket 7 boards. Even Cyrix/Via are now using Socket-370 solutions.

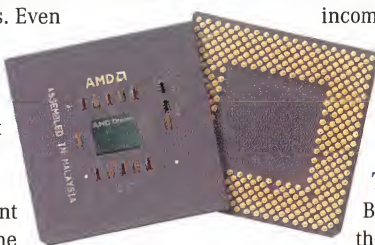
Architecturally, the Duron is very reminiscent of the Athlon. With the 200MHz EV6 bus and the Einstein-level floating point unit used in the Athlon, the Duron is perfect for demanding 3D applications. The Duron also uses the same core as the Athlon, but in place of 256K of full-speed on-die L2 cache, there is only 64K L2 cache. However, like the Athlon, the Duron features a sizeable 128K L1 cache, which makes the total L1/L2 cache available to the Duron 192K. This is significantly more than the Celeron's 128K (the Celeron has to duplicate its 32K L1 cache in L2), and thus not the handicap that it may initially seem.

The 200MHz DDR (100MHz Double Pumped) EV6 FSB speed of the Duron is particularly impressive when compared to the paltry 66MHz system bus used by the Celeron. Nonetheless, until a 200MHz DDRAM chipset is available for AMD processors, we won't see the true benefits of the EV6 DDR bus in either the Athlon or the Duron.

For us, the principal problem with the Duron is motherboard availability and stability - whilst the Via KT133 boards have some impressive specs, they are constrained by bad drivers (particularly AGP) and nagging incompatibilities when used in conjunction with some hardware. Boards by Asus (A7V), MSI (K7T) and Aopen (AK33) are highly recommended.

The Conclusion

Based on the default bus speeds, the Duron offers a clear advantage in performance over the 66MHz Celeron II. Even though overclocking the Celeron to 100MHz FSB produces a large performance reward, the Duron still crushes the Celeron setup. The conclusion is quite clear - right now the Duron is the price/performance winner by a significant margin. Until Intel revises the ailing Celeron lineup, AMD is going to continue to make inroads into the low-end market. Benefiting from superior bus speed, greater usable cache size, and a far more advanced architecture, the Duron wipes the floor with the Celeron. The Duron excels in any application that's thrown at it, being equally adept at playing games or rendering a CAD scene. There is no question: unless you're upgrading from an old Pentium II system, the AMD Duron is the best low-end solution for the discerning buyer.



In a bid to reduce costs, the Celeron is now sold exclusively in a socketed form factor. As L2 cache has been included on die, there is no reason for a costly and bulky cartridge. Both the Celeron and Pentium III line-up should be used with Socket 370 boards.

The new Celeron will appeal to users of old Pentium II systems looking for an easy upgrade; if you're using a Slot 1 Pentium II 233 - 450, the Celeron at 700MHz makes a worthwhile upgrade for a minimal cost. You will also need to purchase an FC-PGA Slotket adaptor (about \$25) in order to run a socketed processor in a Slot-1 board. Also, make sure you download the latest BIOS for your motherboard prior to installing a new CPU. If you can determine the make of your motherboard, the BIOS can be found at the manufacturer's web site.

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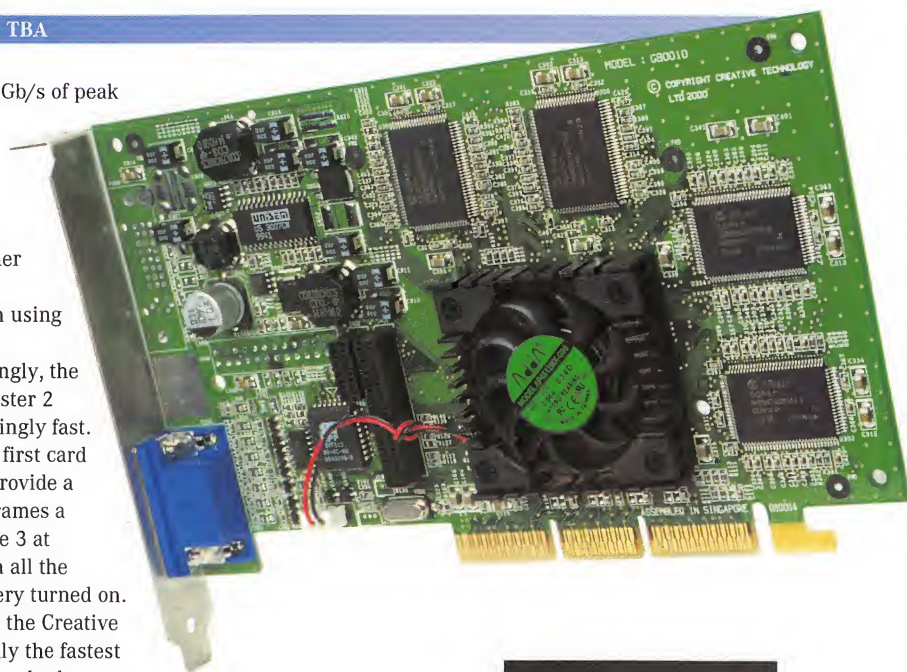
Price TBA

Aimed at the most technologically demanding gamer, the Annihilator 2 Ultra is based around the Nvidia GeForce 2 GTS Ultra chipset, the world's fastest Graphics Processing Unit (GPU). Architecturally, the GeForce 2 GTS Ultra is identical to that of the GeForce 2 GTS. It features the same T&L engine, four rendering pipelines and the ability to process two textures per pipeline per clock. The only difference that exists is that the Ultra variant uses a 0.18 micron process, allowing it to ramp up to a higher speed. Whereas the standard GTS runs at a default core speed of 200MHz, the Ultra ships at 250 MHz. This offers a peak fillrate of over a gigapixel (or two gigatexels), an improvement of 25% over its predecessor.

More importantly, however, the Ultra also comes with high-speed memory. One of the largest bottlenecks in 3D card design is the memory subsystem - Nvidia has tried to alleviate this bandwidth bottleneck by using faster memory and cranking the memory clock from 333MHz DDR to 460MHz DDR. This is a sizeable increase (around 39%), yielding an

impressive 7.36Gb/s of peak memory bandwidth. Memory bandwidth is particularly relevant at higher resolutions, especially when using 32-bit textures.

Not surprisingly, the Creative 3D Blaster 2 Ultra is staggeringly fast. In fact, it is the first card we've used to provide a consistent 60 frames a second in Quake 3 at 1600x1200 with all the graphical frippery turned on. However, while the Creative board is certainly the fastest thing available, only the most hardcore will be able to justify the high expense. Those framerate will certainly be worth it, though.



Can you spot the difference between the Ultra and the regular model?

ASUS

V7100 GEFORCE 2 MX

Distributor Cassa

Price \$349

With the GeForce 2 GTS and the Quadro dominating the high-end enthusiast market, it wasn't surprising to see Nvidia make a play for the low-end market. The Asus V7100 is aimed at the sensible majority of the market, who cannot justify spending \$600 on a biannual videocard upgrade.

As the name implies, the GeForce 2 MX is based upon a modified version of the GeForce 2 GTS core. The main difference is that the MX features two rendering pipelines, whereas the GTS features a total of four. The MX, however, is positioned at the cost-conscious market, so instead of selling the chip at 200MHz like the GTS, Nvidia chose to clock the GeForce2 MX at a peppy 175MHz. At this lowered speed, with only two rendering pipelines, the MX has a fill-rate comparable to the original GeForce 256 SDR.

As a stock standard card, the GeForce 2 MX performs roughly on par with a standard GeForce256 SDR. However, by overclocking the memory clock with Entech's Powerstrip, the MX can reach speeds equivalent to the GeForce DDR.

Remember that the MX chipset is mainly constrained by memory speeds - small adjustments to the memory speeds can yield significant performance rewards. If you plan to overclock the MX to a large extent, it would be prudent to add a small heatsink and fan above the core chipset.

Also like the GTS, the MX is based around a .18 micron fabrication process. Thus, it should be able to hit a virtually identical clock speed with the same amount of cooling.

Hardware enthusiasts have always associated the words 'low cost' with another word - 'crap'. Like the AMD Duron, the GeForce 2 MX puts an end to this

rubbish. If you want a card that kicks like a mule, but don't really plan on pawing off your kidneys/grandmother/soul, the V7100 is the goods.



The V7100 offers an exceptional performance/cost ratio

SEAGATE

CHEETAH X15

Distributor Seagate Technology

Price \$1295

With a name inherited from the world's fastest aeroplane, you know that the X15 is going to be fast.

Up until now, hard disks have been available at three spindle speeds: 5,400, 7,200 and 10,000 RPM. Most consumer drives are sold at 7,200 RPM, while 10,000 RPM continues to dominate the high-end SCSI160 server/workstation market. Seagate, whose range of Cheetah drives work as the backbone of most e-commerce sites, have upped the bar once again with the release of the 15,000 RPM Cheetah X15. With a seek time of less than 3.9ms, and operating at such high spindle speeds, the X15 is the fastest commercial drive available. At this speed, the X15 thrashes all 10,000RPM SCSI units, including the Atlas 10k, by a sizeable margin. The drive is also equipped with 4Mb of Buffer memory, rather than the meagre 2Mb featured on most high-end drives. A 16Mb variant is available for those doing a lot of video editing, database operations or something similarly memory intensive. Expect the 16Mb version to have a large price premium.

Designed principally for demanding server applications, the X15 is equally capable in games and general Windows usage. Users can now load up Quake 3 levels in mere seconds, and start Windows up in record time. If you use your computer for other things than games (heaven forbid!), the X15 is perfect for A/V editing, manipulating huge Photoshop images or large-

scale e-commerce applications. 18Gb of room isn't too giant, but should satisfy most users. Besides, most power users will want to place their OS, applications and swap files on separate drives for optimal performance. In sum, the X15 is insanely fast (especially when configured as a RAID device), but the price limits this drive to the extremely wealthy and demanding professionals.



Under this unassuming exterior lies a veritable Beast of a drive

CREATIVE

WEBCAM GO! PLUS

Distributor Creative

Price \$339

The Creative WebCam Go! Plus is the first portable WebCam. On one hand, it's perfect for standard Web Cam applications such as simple videoconferencing over NetMeeting, video email and creating effective websites. But the WebCam Go can also be taken on the road, and used as a battery operated digital camera with included voice annotation recorder.

The WebCam Go comes bundled with a six-foot long USB cable, two AAA batteries and a soft carry case. The camera works under Windows ME and, unlike the Logitech Quick

from the main casing. This makes it easy to mount onto the top of a monitor. You can snap the lens back in place to reconfigure the Web Cam Go as a shirt-pocket sized portable camera.

As we've come to expect from multi-purpose devices (my all-in-one phone/fax/copier is a classic example), you often sacrifice quality in the bid to integrate different functions into one product. In tests, the Web Cam Go offered admirable image quality, certainly on par with most other cheap Web Cams. However, as a digital camera, the WebCam Go is seriously lacking. Sadly, the still images lack the vibrancy, sharpness and colour range of a dedicated device. Additionally, the camera lacks a flash, and isn't suitable for low-light conditions. 8Mb of non-upgradeable memory is included, allowing you to store up to 200 images at 640x480 resolution, and more than 400 images at 320x240 resolution.

The Web Cam Go! Plus is a rudimentary solution, best suited to the novice user. But, if you're on a limited budget, and can't decide between a dedicated web cam or digital camera, the WebCam Go may be worth considering.



Cam, has full Windows 2000 support. Creative has included its own photo management software, as well as Arcsoft's Polaroid Photomax, a fairly stripped down suite of image manipulation tools. Like the original WebCam 3, the Web Cam Go has a lens that tilts back

Smile and say, "Cheese", anyone reading this very poor caption

Hotware Reviews

MICROSOFT

SIDEWINDER PRECISION 2 JOYSTICK

Distributor Microsoft

Price \$89

After a less than impressive start, Microsoft has finally secured itself a position as one of the world's premier peripheral manufacturers.

Without the usual fanfare associated with a Microsoft product launch, the engineers at the Big-M have grabbed their drafting boards and screwdrivers, and performed a complete overhaul of the already impressive Sidewinder Precision 2 joystick with USB interface. The new design has a polished, professional feel - the stick is ergonomically designed, and features just the right amount of resistance to movement. All the button presses and switches feel solid and give good tactile feedback.

One of the most important additions was the analogue throttle stick. In a flight sim, this can be used to incrementally modify the thrust, throttle or altitude. The rudder control is another boon for flight simmers. By twisting the joystick in lateral movements, you can control the rudder of a plane or boat. The whole rig sits on a hefty, metal base with a compact footprint. The 3-year Microsoft warranty ensures its durability.

Installing the Precision 2 into the USB port is a snap. There's no game port support, so you will need use Windows 95 OSR2 or later to use this controller. DOS games may work if run via the Windows command prompt.

The Precision 2 is a fantastic update of a nearly flawless product. If you're looking for a solid, reliable, no-frills stick, you can't do better than the Precision 2. And if you're just dipping your toe into the realm of serious flight sims, the Precision 2 is a good place to start. However, if you're a seasoned Falcon 4.0 or EF2000 fanatic, you'd be better off with something more upscale, like the CH Products F-16 USB.

One of the least phallic-looking joysticks we've seen in quite some time



GRAVIS

DESTROYER TILT GAMEPAD

Distributor Acco

Price \$64.95



No prizes for guessing whose svelte digits were called upon to model for the photo shoot

Like the Sidewinder Freestyle Pro from Microsoft, the Destroyer Tilt can be set to respond to your body movements: by tilting the controller in any direction, your in-game persona will react in kind. This function is particularly useful when playing games such as Motocross Madness 2 and most platform games. On the other hand, by turning the 'G-Force Tilt' technology off, the controller can be used as a standard digital controller. As a standard control pad for games like Rugby



2001, the buttons and D-Pad felt tight, responsive and precise.

Using a USB interface, the Destroyer is a breeze to setup. Simply plug-in, and your OS will recognise the new controller immediately -

you're ready to get fragging right out of the box. In spite of the odd styling and offensively coloured buttons, the Gravis Tilt is a surprisingly robust, functional and low-cost peripheral. Highly recommended.

MICROSOFT

SIDEWINDER GAMEVOICE

Distributor Microsoft

Price \$99

Some of you may be familiar with Roger Wilco and Battlefield Communicator. These realtime voice chat programs allow people to converse while playing internet or LAN games. While popular for clans or teams that play together regularly, they haven't been adopted by the mainstream gamer - these early attempts require that both players have the software installed to operate. Also, both programs have rather serious bandwidth overheads. Realising the nascent promise of these programs, Microsoft has entered the potentially lucrative V.I.P (Voice over IP) market.

Over a year ago, Microsoft (in typical fashion) acquired BattleCom, the small start-up responsible for Battlefield Communicator. The result of this merger is the Microsoft Sidewinder GameVoice, a complete solution which offers a headset microphone, an innovative 'base-station' and powerful management software. By combining the experience of BattleCom with the financial resources and marketing savvy of Microsoft, we have a real contender. With Microsoft's backing, you can be assured that V.I.P will finally take off.

Unlike most packages of this type, the GameVoice comes with more than just a rudimentary headset/software combo. What makes this so special is the included 'base station', which resides on your desk. This circular device plugs into a spare

USB port, and gives you fingertip access for many of the GameVoice's features.

Thanks to the large, intuitively placed buttons, gamers can easily select which individuals they want to hear, and to whom they wish to speak. The buttons labelled 1 through 4 can be used to communicate with any combination of individuals. For example, button 1 could be used for sending orders to player '133t' and 'DeathKilla', button 2 could be used for communicating with 'DeathKilla' alone, button 3 to 'OMegaHaXOR' and button 4 to 'Narcissa' etc. The 'All' button communicates with everyone in the game, while the 'Team' button broadcasts exclusively to your teammates.

The 'All' button is great for end-of-game bragging and taunting your enemies, while the 'Team' function is useful when attempting to rally your forces, or organise an effective attack upon an enemy base. And, much to the delight of Sebastian, who uses an overclocked 300 baud modem, the GameVoice sounds



robust and clear over narrowband connections! On the other hand, Cable/DSL users

will be able to use the extra bandwidth for better sound and smoother play.

Without question, the most impressive feature of the Microsoft GameVoice is the included voice recognition software. This offers a revolutionary method of in-game control. If you've ever forgotten the key for a critical game command, this can prove invaluable. In Unreal Tournament, for instance, by pressing the command key on the control pad and saying 'Sniper Rifle', your character will automatically shift weapons. Or, in Falcon 4, by saying 'Flaps Down', you can have the computer lower your flaps without even touching the keyboard. Much to our collective surprise, the GameVoice even recognises Brett's soprano dulcets.

Short of making a conference call to your other teammates, the SideWinder GameVoice is the best option for those interested in team-based games. With the advent of broadband internet, the Game Voice looks set to become an essential peripheral. We can't wait to try it with Team Fortress 2.



By the time Team Fortress 2 arrives, this will be cheap

300 baud modem, the GameVoice sounds

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Hotware Roundup

PORTABLE MP3 PLAYERS

by Sebastian Fern

Since the first devices became available just over a year ago, Portable MP3 players have come a long way. Early adopters of the new technology such as Creative and Diamond/S3 are now producing their second generation of players. Functionality has increased greatly as well as sound quality. Unfortunately, sound quality is still not a given - particular care must be taken when choosing a product and trying a number of players before you buy will allow you to hear the difference. After all beyond all the convenience and flashy features you're really buying a portable music player.

In the realm of portable music, MP3 players seem to have more many more differentiating features than portable cassette, CD or MiniDisc players. On face value this is true as the use of solid-state memory allows incredible scope for different sizes and shapes of devices. When it comes to the crunch, however, there are a number of crucial areas that must be considered. Beyond these areas, the choice becomes about the look and feel of the player, gimmicky (and perhaps useful) additional features and whether or not you can fit the device in the coin pocket of your jeans.

Creative Nomad II

SIZE	65 x 93 x 21 mm
BUILT IN MEMORY	N/A
MEMORY UPGRADES	32/64Mb
PC CONNECTION	USB
OTHER FEATURES	FM tuner, Voice record, Plays WMA

The Nomad II has excellent playback quality and is encased in a stylish housing. The large backlit LCD provides great visibility for the Nomad II's user interface. This interface was very intuitive and the semi-graphical nature of it made the player a joy to use. USB connectivity is a necessity in preventing frustratingly slow music transfer and the player gets a tick in

the box there. The FM tuner and voice recording capabilities round off the player nicely. One downside is that there is no built in memory so the storage of the Nomad II is limited to the size of the installed flashcard.

Creative Nomad II MG

SIZE	58 x 90 x 18 mm
BUILT IN MEMORY	64Mb
MEMORY UPGRADES	32/64Mb
PC CONNECTION	USB
OTHER FEATURES	Recordable FM tuner, Voice record, Plays WMA

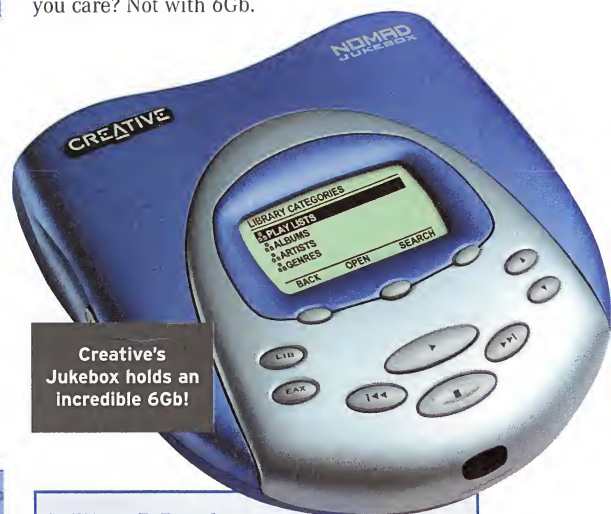
The Nomad II MG is essentially the same device as the Nomad II but with a slicker magnesium casing, minimalist display and extra memory and features. The MG addresses the shortcoming of its sibling by including 64Mb of built-in memory. The minimalist design makes for a slight downgrade in the ease of use stakes but the stylish user interface is almost as intuitive. The ability to record FM broadcasts and play recordings at variable speeds are not significant additions but the Nomad II is an excellent device and the MG model only builds on this.

Creative Nomad Jukebox

SIZE	125 x 125 x 38 mm
BUILT IN MEMORY	6Gb
MEMORY UPGRADES	N/A
PC CONNECTION	USB
OTHER FEATURES	Voice recording, Plays WMA, 5 min shock protect

Using a built-in hard drive rather than flash memory allows the Nomad Jukebox its enormous capacity. The player looks more like a Discman than standard players and is significantly larger than the rest of the pack. But the fact that the player could house a

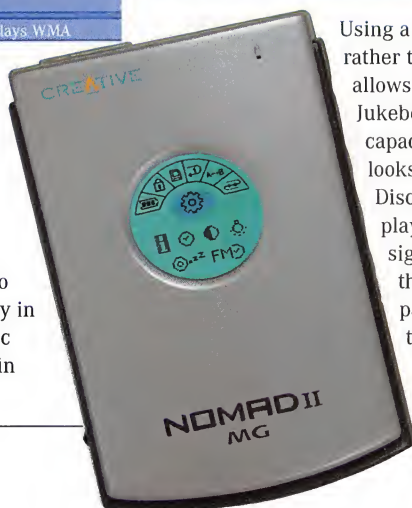
complete MP3 collection comfortably more than makes up for its size. Because the Jukebox has moving parts (the hard drive) it can skip; Creative have anticipated this and included a huge 8Mb buffer that provides for 5 minutes of shock protection (compare this to a maximum of 30 seconds in portable CD players). The user interface is very similar that of the Nomad II, which can only be a good thing, and it shares the exact same crisp backlit LCD. More cumbersome than the smaller players but do you care? Not with 6Gb.



Creative's Jukebox holds an incredible 6Gb!

MP3 Market

The portable MP3 player market is maturing but there are still some poor quality systems out there. Don't sacrifice sound quality and go for the most memory you can afford. Systems with a maximum of 32MB should be left out of contention. A player from Creative or S3 is your best option at the moment but competition will stiffen when other manufacturers debut their latest and greatest. In the arena of standard players the Rio 600 wins by a nose, ahead of the Nomad II MG. For an incredible player with incredible capacity at the cost of a small increase in size the Nomad Jukebox is the key.



What to Look For

The following are the most important features to look for. Firstly, expandability through an expansion slot - no matter how much RAM is built into a player, you want to be able to pick up a piece of SmartMedia or CompactFlash RAM in order to boost your storage capacity quickly and easily. Most new models on the market have one or more card slots, allowing you to upgrade RAM or switch between different flash memory cards. However, some players only have built-in RAM with no possibility for expansion and, as such, are way too limiting.

An effective interface is very important. Don't be fooled by too many fancy buttons. Players need to have a simple and intuitive interface - why fight the player for domination when you just want some tunes on the go? Some players have strange, convoluted interface features that do nothing but detract from the enjoyment of the whole "portable music" experience. It's less of an issue now that it's becoming more standard but settings retention is very import - earlier players lacked the ability to remember anything. Some went so far as to require a volume reset with every power up. The best players today have the ability to remember the last song you played and other settings even after you power down and take out the batteries. This is probably the most overlooked area in choosing an MP3 player, but if you pick up a device with little or no retention, frustration will rule your digital music relationship.

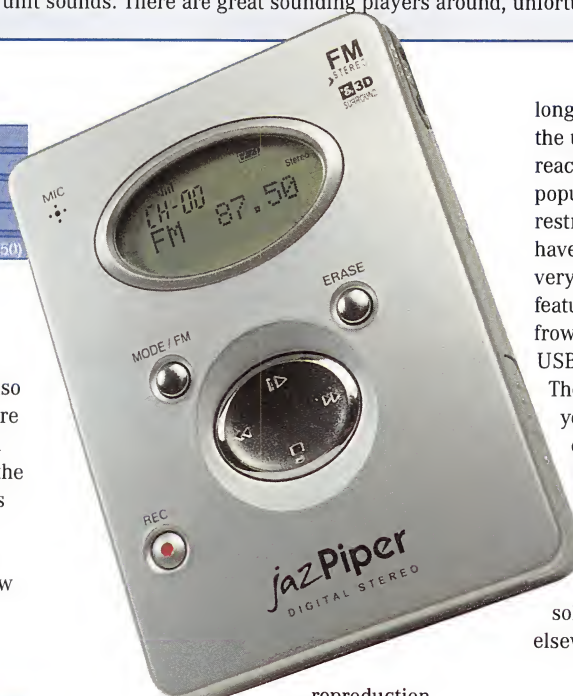
Look for a machine with rugged durability - this is a may seem redundant but you'd be surprised how many flimsy players there are out there. You want the player to last. You want to throw it in your bag, take off on a mad rush with all your gear crashing around inside while you catch that bus, and rip it out to listen to your tunes. Who wants to reach inside and find their player with a cracked casing or with buttons popping straight out? Some players use cheap materials that feel like lacquered rice paper with a fancy paintjob. There's no way you can survive without a durable player.

Finally and most importantly there's audio quality. Don't resign yourself to the fact that portable music means lowering your expectations for great sound. Portable players can sound awesome - most just don't quite make it there. As I said before, try before you buy and you'll notice that there's enormous variation in the way each unit sounds. There are great sounding players around, unfortunately they're not yet the majority.

jazPiper MVR64P

SIZE	66 x 90 x 18 mm
BUILT IN MEMORY	64Mb
MEMORY UPGRADES	32/64Mb
PC CONNECTION	Parallel port
OTHER FEATURES	FM tuner, Voice recording, Phonebook (250)

The newer 64Mb jazPiper is a great improvement over the original. The sound quality has improved to bring it up to a very good level. The inclusion of an FM tuner is also a nice addition. The user interface and LCD are also very solid. The phonebook function is an impressive extra that seems to be unique to the jazPiper and indicates the movement towards convergence of portable audio, mobile telephony and PDA's. What lets the jazPiper down however is the parallel connection. Slow transfer speeds are the only significant drawback of this very good value machine.



longer cutting edge. In terms of sound quality the unit is a very strong performer, and reaches the top of the heap for high volume popular music. The display is text-only restricting the user interface but the menus have been implemented quite well. The Yepp is very similar to the jazPiper in both look and features. The standard parallel connection was frowned upon but at least there is an option for USB - this should really be standard, however.

The Yepp is a good value machine and great if you want it constantly on full volume, if you can handle cranking it down a notch you will find a better solution elsewhere.

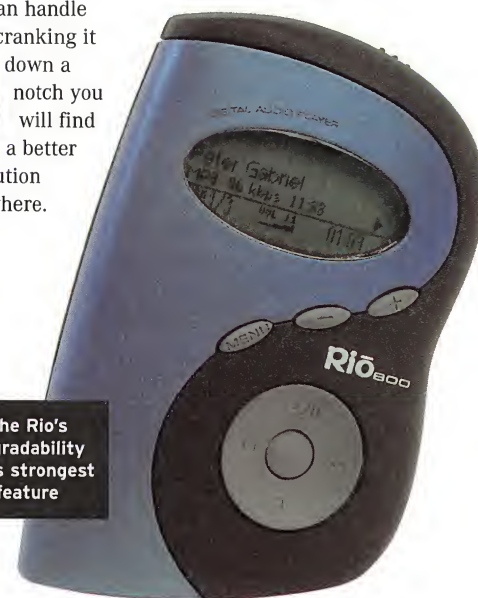
S3 Rio 600

SIZE	65 x 87 x 17.2 mm
BUILT IN MEMORY	32Mb
MEMORY UPGRADES	32/64/340Mb
PC CONNECTION	USB
OTHER FEATURES	Plays WMA, Snap-on faceplates

Diamond Multimedia brought some of the first MP3 players to the market. Now, under the S3 banner, the latest incarnation of the excellent Rio series is born. The sound quality of the Rio 600 rivals

that of the Creative products with true

reproduction throughout the sound spectrum. The LCD is sharp and bright and the user interface has a very comfortable feel about it. Faceplates can be snapped on and off the player making it a swappable fashion accessory as well. The Rio 600 uses an unconventional proprietary method for memory expansion - the entire back of the player houses the memory and is swapped to gain greater capacity. This allows the Rio's awesome 340Mb upgrade, giving the player a huge 372Mb. The player looks very good, replacing the standard metallic rectangle with sexy organic curves. This is definitely one of the best players out there.



The Rio's upgradability is its strongest feature



Samsung Yepp E-64

SIZE	65 x 87 x 17.2 mm
BUILT IN MEMORY	64Mb
MEMORY UPGRADES	16/32Mb
PC CONNECTION	Parallel port (USB optional)
OTHER FEATURES	Voice recording, Phonebook (350)

Although Samsung has recently been trumping up their MP3 players their flagship model is no

Final Recommendations

- Diamond Rio 600
- Creative Nomad II MG
- Creative Nomad Jukebox

The podium is shared by three of the contenders, all on a fairly even keel. The Rio 600 probably just pips the Nomad II MG at the post due to its expandability. The sheer volume of music that the Nomad Jukebox can hold is breathtaking.



The Beast

AN ULTIMATE RIG BY HUGH NORTON-SMITH

Humming away in a corner of the high security PC PowerPlay complex, the Beast is the pinnacle of PC technology. The Beast pushes the boundaries of supercomputing and is banned from sale in 34 countries. Developed in conjunction with Silicon Graphics, Cray and MIT, the PCPP Beast is able to simulate nuclear explosions at the atomic level, crunch Mersian Primes, while simultaneously rendering Ultima Ascension at over 400 frames per second. In sum, it makes the lovechild of Deep Blue and HAL 9000 seem a mere toy.

Gamers should own a beast for themselves.

CPU: Dual Pentium III 1.13 GHz

Contrary to Intel's assertion, the recently announced 1.13 GHz Pentium III Coppermine does work in SMP mode. While supplies of the chip are scarce and outrageously expensive, you can rest assured that you'll thrash any single processor system in Quake3. Now that Windows 2000 supports SMP and DirectX 7, we should be seeing more games that are capable of utilising SMP. When the AMD Athlon goes dual (Mustang, anyone?), we'll give it consideration!

Motherboard: Microstar 694D Pro

The 694D is MSI's latest Apollo Pro 133A dual motherboard. The Apollo Pro is the only chipset that supports 133MHz Coppermine processors without using RAMBUS. The 694D also comes with tons of expansion slots, an ATA/100 controller and integrated IDE RAID

support. If you're interested, this board is also available with an optional Texas Instruments IEEE 1394 Firewire controller. The crème-de-la-crème.

RAM: 256Mb KingMaxx TinyBGA PC150 SDRAM

256Mb RAM should keep the Beast in check for some time. Excellent for those times when you need to run Photoshop, Deus Ex and Quake3 simultaneously! PC150 rated RAM means it can be operated at an unprecedented 150MHz. This is particularly useful for overclockers who plan to run their FSB beyond 133MHz.

SCSI Card: Adaptec AHA-2940U2W

Dual channel Ultra 2 Wide SCSI card from Adaptec. 'Nuff said.

Hard Drive: Seagate Cheetah X15 18Gb

The fastest hard disk available, the X15 trounces all the competition. The SCSI X15 runs at a huge 15,000 rpm, and has a chunky 4Mb of cache. If you buy a couple of these, you can run them in a redundant RAID array...

Optical Drive: Ricoh M9060A

With the M9060M, Ricoh has combined the functionality of a DVD-ROM and a CD-RW drive into one compact unit. The M9060 can read at 24x, write at 8x, rewrite at 4x and read DVD-ROM at 4x. Very impressive.

Videocard: Asus V7800 GeForce 2 GTS Ultra

The GeForce 2 GTS is the fastest graphics

accelerator on the market - coupled with 64Mb of DDRAM and Asus' cool SmartDoctor utilities, the V7800 is the one to beat.

Soundcard: Creative SoundBlaster Live! Platinum

The SB Live! Platinum package includes the perennially popular SBLive! Card, as well as the Live Drive II Optical interface. It also comes bundled with a massive software package.

Speakers: Videologic Sirocco Crossfire

The Crossfire setup has it all: 4 speaker surround, a hefty bass bin and music fidelity that puts a Rotel system to shame. The perfect adjunct to the SB Live Platinum.

Monitor: Sony G500 21" Trinitron

Able to pull off 2048x1536, this is bound to impress the mates, especially when used in conjunction with a capable videocard like the V7800. Big, flat and sexy. Best of all, it's a Sony.

Case: Supermicro SC750-A

The Supermicro 750 is a behemoth. It can hold up to 16 fans, comes equipped with an AMD approved 300W Sparkle power supply, and has wheels on the bottom! A quality case like this could conceivably outlast the rest of your components.

Networking: 3COM 3C905C-TX

3Com have a reputation for making the best networking cards. The PCI-based 3C905C is no exception, with the best drivers and support available.

MOTHERBOARDS BUILT FOR SPEED

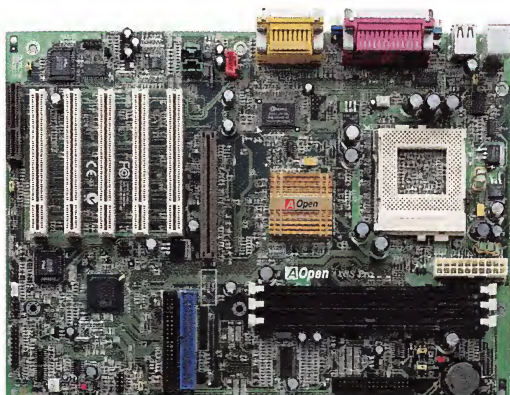
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Celeron, Pentium, Athlon, Duron – an AOpen motherboard can mix it with the best. And with Die Hard Bios in the Pro series you know, quick as a flash, our motherboards are champion performers.

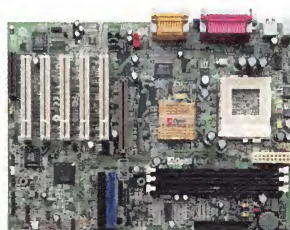
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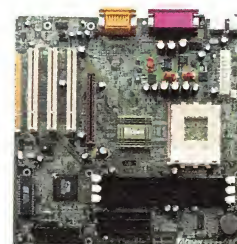
AX34 Pro - VIA 694X

Die Hard Bios with external switch • VIA 694X chipset
• Jumper-less design • Supports PC-133 RAM
• 4x AGP • Sound on-board



AX3S Pro - Intel 815E

Supports Intel Celeron and Pentium III Socket 370 CPU • Die Hard Bios with external controller • Supports PC133 SDRAM DIMM • Enlarged 24K gold plated heatsink for chipset • Integrated 2D/3D graphics engine with Dynamic Video Memory Technology: 4MB SDRAM display cache on board and one AGP slot for 4x/2x/1x AGP graphics card upgrade



MK33 - Duron 2 Athlon

Supports AMD Athlon and Duron Socket A CPUs • Supports PC133 and VCM133 (virtual channel memory) DIMM • Supports 1x/2x/4x AGP mode • Resettable fuse providing short circuit protection for keyboard and USB device • ACPI S3 (suspend to RAM) and S4 (suspend to disk)



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M&ASER1006

SETUP

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



DANIEL RUTTER WAXES TECHNICAL

WRITE TO

SETUP

PC PowerPlay
PO BOX 634
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2016

setup@pcpowerplay.com.au

When you write remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated *.INI files for Windows that might tell me more about your problem. Give me as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC. Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to all of your queries.

Red ones go faster!

Q> Howdy ho to all the people at PCPP! I'm sitting here looking at my PC case and was wondering if I could give a facelift. What I mean is, giving it a nice paint job. Getting rid of this crappy beige colour for something groovier and a lot nicer to look at. But I wouldn't have a clue where to start, what types of paints I could use and even if it's safe for my PC. I can take all the panels off the case and pretty much get it down to it's skin and bones. I know this isn't really a hardware or a major computer question, but I thought someone at PCPP might have given it a go.

Darren Ecclestone

A> Hey, no problem. All you need to do is start with a computer case:



... and then just slap some paint on it:



With a small lick of paint, your rig can look just like Dan's! But only in Photoshop...

It's really that simple! My mad Photoshop skillz aside, painting PC cases ain't too hard. It's easy enough to get the panels off just about any case, even if they're riveted on - you can drill out pop rivets. Then you just go over 'em with a power drill and wire brush until you've got bare steel, and paint 'em with anything that'll stick to metal.

You can use multiple sanded-back coats of automotive paint and make it really gorgeous, if you like. More than a few PC fetishists have persuaded car respray places to do their PCs for not too many dollars. But plastic front panels are more of a problem. You can get paints that stick OK to plastic from model shops (it's expensive, but you don't need much) or, no doubt, proper paint suppliers. But your PC will look dorky if your CD-ROM and floppy drive front panels are still beige, so you've got to do them too. Which can be fiddly.

If you're going to have a stab at it, I'd recommend you go to a computer shop and buy a new case - something nice and solid - and screw around with THAT, while your PC's still working in the old case. Then you can transplant it when the job's done, and you don't lose the PC for days on end as you wait for paint to dry. Or for the hot-rod shop to finish putting purple flames down the side.

Modem voodoo

Q> Yo PCPowerPlayers!!! I have one question, and that is about (drum roll please) - Modems!

Yes yes, I know everyone writes in about this, BUT I would like to know what some of the jargon means, as I have just downloaded an excellent, freeware software package call iSpeed. It lets you optimise your modem TTL, MTU, RWIN etc., and it even explains to some extent what these mean. Unfortunately, that "some extent" isn't that great. So, I would like to know what MTU, RWIN, MSS and TTL mean.

I have a 56kbps modem, what would be a good config for it? The program is available from <http://www.hms.com/>, and is a handy dandy little thing.

FRiO

A>

What do the acronyms mean? Nothing important. Oh, all right.

MTU is Maximum Transmission Unit, the biggest packet size a network will transmit. RWIN's the TCP Receive Window size; it's how much unacknowledged data there can be in a TCP connection before things grind to a halt as the transmitter waits for some hint that the receiver's still listening. MSS is the TCP Maximum Segment Size, the most data that a node can send in one segment. TTL is Time To Live, how many seconds or network "hops", whichever is the larger, a packet is allowed to take before the devices relaying it are allowed to give up and kill it.

There's no magic bullet setting that'll suddenly give you much better speed from a modem connection. Modem connections suck. You can't make 'em stop sucking. Live with it.

If you've got an old version of Windows 95, before Dial-Up Networking (DUN) version 1.3, then you've probably got an MTU setting bug that may halve your connection speed at times. But just grabbing the DUN 1.3 update from Microsoft cures it, and further MTU fiddling will only gain you about half an RCH more speed.

I'm not going to tell you what RCH stands for. Ask your daddy.

Winding up RWIN on a broadband connection (which your modem is NOT) can help throughput from high-latency sites - Web surfing in the States, in other words. It won't do you any good for games, and it won't do anything significant for modem connections.

Various people are under the impression that there should be some relationship between RWIN and MSS. They're wrong. Well, they might have an obscure technical point, but they don't get any more speed out of it. Some old broken TCP/IP stacks were apparently significantly less crap if you made RWIN some multiple of MSS, but this doesn't apply for more recent operating systems.

Fiddling with TTL is just goofy. The point of the setting is to stop packets from causing gridlock if they're routed

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Q> Hail great and mighty tech-guy, [Note - for the comfort of readers who are trying to eat, 150 words of wow-you-guys-are-so-great text has been excised from this letter. It may have worked this time, but bribery's more reliable - Ed.]

So, I saved up a bit of money, and am now the proud owner of a speedy PIII-533EB [I'm going to assume you hit the wrong key, there, and mean 733EB or something - the slowest EB P-III is the 600 - Ed]. However, and this is where my question starts, while investigating which games to invest in, I have come across the abbreviations TCP/IP and IPX, as requirements for multiplayer on many titles.

In an attempt to avoid succumbing to the inevitable condemnation my peers would impose upon me, can you please provide an answer to this question.

Francis

A> Y'know Francis, in your enthusiasm to kiss PCPP's bottom so enthusiastically that we're all going to have bum-hickeys for weeks, you plumb forgot to finish ASKING that question. But no matter. I know what you mean.

IPX/SPX and TCP/IP are both network protocols - sets of rules by which data can be transferred over a Local or Wide Area Network (LAN or WAN). Network games pretty much all require one or the other in order to work. The Internet is the ultimate WAN, and uses TCP/IP; a home network is a LAN, and can use all sorts of protocols, including IPX/SPX and TCP/IP.

Actually, both of these "protocols" are really two protocols - IPX/SPX is

the Sequenced Packet Exchange transfer layer protocol running on top of the Internetwork Packet Exchange networking protocol, and TCP/IP is Internet Protocol on top of Transport Control Protocol. They're colloquially treated as single protocols, though, and you deal with them as if they were one lump in Windows.

Modern operating systems let you run more than one protocol on a single network. The current flavours of Windows actually make it about as easy as it CAN be to run IPX/SPX and TCP/IP simultaneously.

The third common LAN protocol is NetBEUI. It's a good no-configuration-needed protocol for simple business LANs, but I don't know of any games that use it.

Different versions of Windows install different protocols by default, but you can add and remove protocols as you like. Fool around in Network Properties and you'll get the idea quickly enough.

If you use TCP/IP, every computer on the network has to have an IP address. This means you either need a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) server somewhere on the network (Windows 98SE and 2000's Internet Connection Sharing does DHCP, for instance), or you have to set static IP addresses for the machines.

Or you can just leave them with the default Windows get-an-address-automatically setting, if they're all running Win98 or later. If 98-and-later versions of Windows CAN'T find a DHCP server to give them an IP address, they'll pick a random one from the "LINKLOCAL network" IP address space, which means an address starting with 169.254 and with two more arbitrary numbers on the end. The LINKLOCAL space is a "class B network", which means the network ID, indicated by the subnet mask, is the first two numbers.

All 169.254.X.X computers can see each other provided they have one different number out of the last two, and since the last two numbers can be from 0 to 255 and from 1 to 254 respectively, up to 64,515 computers can be on this network at once and address clashes are unlikely.

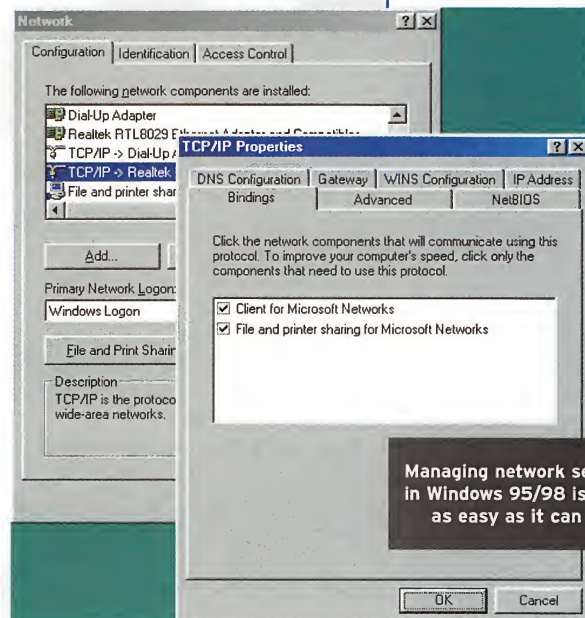


LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS THE MOST EXCELLENT SIDEWINDER AND DUAL STRIKE CONTROL PADS FROM MICROSOFT'S PREMIERE RANGE OF GAME CONTROLLERS. CHEERS MICROSOFT!

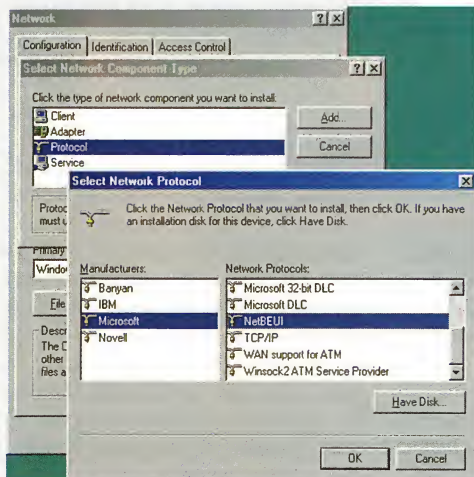
The auto-address option works OK, but the computer always pauses during startup as it looks for a DHCP server.

Any protocol you've got installed, or all, or none, can be used on a LAN for Windows file and printer sharing. It depends on what services you choose to "bind" to which protocol.

It doesn't hurt to have everything bound to everything; it's just untidy.



Managing network settings in Windows 95/98 is about as easy as it can get



You would think it would waste some significant amount of memory, or eat more processor time, or something, but there is actually no difference. Feel free to prune out protocols and clients and bindings that you're not using for anything - if you have got the Client for NetWare Networks and you're not ON a NetWare network, there ain't much point keeping it - but don't expect to see a performance gain.

TECH TIPS

I'm building a new PC with everything new except my hard drive. I don't know whether I should take it out of my old one (P90, 16Mb, Windows 95) and just put it in my new one. Would this work and would it recognise all the new hardware? By the way, I'm going to upgrade to Windows 98.

Andrew

When you make major changes to the configuration of a Windows 95/98 machine - anything involving a motherboard change, basically - you have to at the very least run Setup again. This'll do an over-the-top reinstall, and install the right drivers for all of the low level stuff that's different on different motherboards. It's easy enough to do by starting from a Win98 startup disk, or just booting from a Win98 CD; most current systems can boot from their CD-ROM drive. If you don't reinstall, you've done the rough equivalent of yanking the four cylinder engine out of your Pulsar, dropping a V8 into the gap, slamming the bonnet shut and expecting it to work. Even when you run Setup again, there's no guarantee that it won't go bananas in the setup procedure when trying to upgrade 95 AND detect new hardware AND maintain the previous system config. It's worth a try, but you may find yourself renaming your old Windows directory and installing to a new one, to get a fresh start.

incorrectly, or sent around in loops. With a TTL of 32 (the default in Win95), no packet will ever live more than 32 seconds. Most will either get to their destination or be killed much sooner than that, as TTLs reduced by one on any routing hop, no matter how quick, and most hops take a lot less than a second.

Win98's default TTL is 128, to guard against the rare cases when more than 32 hops are needed to get to a destination machine. This only happens once in a blue moon, but it's a big Internet and it DOES happen now and then, especially when major node outages mean traffic's forced to take all sorts of weird routes around the globe.

If packets aren't making it to a destination, increasing TTL might solve the problem. If it's taking more than 128 hops (or seconds) for packets to make it, though, you'll be in same-day-service mode anyway and might as well go and feed some ducks or something. Decreasing TTL to "speed things up" is about as sensible as deciding to service your car next week, instead of next year, and hoping that your decision will make it go faster right now.

There are reasons for SOME people doing SOME specialised things to fiddle with these settings, but for most applications, including games, there's no reason to.

Whither P-II's?

Q I'm writing concerning the sudden demise of Pentium IIs. When Pentium IIs came in a while back (I'm not sure how long ago), they were all the rage. Testing and reviews done by various magazines (yours included), said that they were a helluva lot faster than Celeron processors, and any other chip produced by Intel's rivals. And apparently, the price was reasonable.

Now what I want to know is - what happened to them?! With the appearance of Pentium IIIs, the Pentium IIs have disappeared. I am currently looking for a computer, and would like a Pentium II, because it's not as expensive as the P-III, and performs a lot better than the Celeron. Why have Intel taken this great, value-for-money, chip off the market?

Andre Eliatamby

A The inferior Celeron you're thinking of was the original version - the 266 and 300MHz Slot 1 models. Those were the only two Celerons to use the "Deschutes" core, which was essentially a Pentium II without the separate Level 2 cache RAM chips.

Since the P-II core doesn't have any L2 cache built in to the processor core,

those two original Celerons did indeed suffer for cache-sensitive tasks; all they had was their Level 1 cache. But they were actually pretty good for 3D games, particularly when you consider that both of them were rather likely to run perfectly happily from 100MHz Front Side Bus (FSB), versus their default 66MHz. This turned them into 400 and 450MHz processors, respectively.

After the original 300MHz Celeron came the "300A", the first model to use the new "Mendocino" core with full-speed Level 2 cache built in. Every Celeron from the 300A to the 533 uses the same core - the newer ones are square "Socket 370" chips instead of big-cartridge Slot 1 ones, but the silicon's the same.

The Mendocino core is pretty much exactly as fast, for single-processor business apps and games, as a Pentium II at the same clock speed. Which rather put the kybosh on the whole P-II caper, really.

Celerons from the "533A" upwards use the new "Coppermine 128" core, which is a chopped-down Pentium III that performs significantly better at a given clock speed than the Mendocino.

If you want P-II performance, no problem. Go and grab yourself a Celeron. The Mendocino-core ones work on practically any Pentium II-capable motherboard (with a cheap "slotket" adaptor board to turn the new Socket 370 CPUs into a Slot 1 package), and the Celeron 466, 500 and 533 are all faster, for desktop computer tasks, than any P-II ever made.

Detective work

Q Dear Great and Almighty PCPP Technical Person. [Hey! Sort it out, you guys! He's "great and mighty", or he's "great and Almighty". Dissension in the Church of Dan will not be tolerated - Ed.]

I desperately need your help!

I've got the biggest stuffed up computer in the world and I don't know any one who can fix the piece of s!#t.

One of my friends stuffed their computer and tried to fix it using mine. I don't how they stuffed theirs but he certainly stuffed mine.

After swapping drives into a my friend's computer, which didn't help it, we reinstalled them into my computer, and guess what it came up with? "System hardware abnormal." And to top it off the internal speaker was beeping its head off at me.

I can't remove the stupid abnormality. So we tried formatting the hard drive and reinstalled Windows 98, but it didn't help, and my drive detection's all messed up too.

How on earth can I remove the abnormality? And what would be making a pain in the arse whirring noise inside of my computer when I start it up? My computer sounds as if it's going to blow up!

Zaphod

A Probably, that whirring noise you hear is a cable jammed in the CPU fan. That'd cause it to spin slowly enough that the alarm would go off.

If you still get the problem, and the CPU cooler's demonstrably working (this bit of the answer's for other Microstar users, not really you...), then press Delete during startup to go into the BIOS setup, go to Special Features Setup, and set "CPU fan detected" to "Disabled".

The other problems you have may be caused by scrambled BIOS settings, caused by electrostatic discharge or some other mishap while you were screwing with the system. In BIOS setup, load the setup defaults from the first menu (which will turn CPU fan detection back on again, if you turned it off before...) and then re-setup the system. Little to nothing needs to be done, on modern computers.

If one drive or another still isn't detected, it's possibly fried, but it's probably just not plugged in properly. Make sure the connector's the right way round and plugged in solidly.

Celeron cranking

Q I own a weedy Celeron 300A, with 64Mb of PC100 ram, 8.4Gb hard drive and an 8Mb TNT2 M64. My Celeron is the old one (slot 1), so my question to you is could I overclock my Celeron to a 450 just by changing the bus frequency to 100MHz on the motherboard?

By the way my motherboard is a Jetway J-791BS. Would I need to buy a extra fan to cool the CPU, so it doesn't overheat and fry?

Jonathon Tinsley

A Something like four out of five 300As will run at 450MHz perfectly happily, without any voltage tweaking. Which you can't do on the Jetway J-791BS, anyway. But it's got a jumper setting for 100MHz FSB, so it's worth a go. It can also handle 90MHz and 112MHz, both of which you might like to try - don't expect 112MHz to work, but 90MHz might be fine if your CPU can't handle 450MHz.

You probably won't need extra cooling, either; as long as you've got reasonable case ventilation, the stock Intel cooler will very likely be fine.

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CD POWERPLAY #54

Starting CD PowerPlay

Welcome to the latest edition of CD PowerPlay. This month's two discs include some of the hottest demos from around the world. Highlight of this month's selection is the long-awaited expansion pack for Microsoft's all-time classic realtime strategy game, Age of Empires II. Half-Life owners be sure to also check out Counterstrike! As always, navigation through the online menus is easy. Simply click on the category you want and then select the game or utility. We hope you enjoy this month's CD and hope to see you back next month for another dose of gaming goodness.

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DISC 1

AGE OF EMPIRES II

THE CONQUERORS



Category: Strategy

Developer: Microsoft

Need: P166, 32MB, SVGA

3D: Direct X

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX

Keys - All moves are via the mouse

■ The Conquerors is the official add-on to the award-winning, best-selling realtime strategy game Age of Empires II. Focusing on legendary leaders, The Conquerors will challenge veterans and novices to wage war on an epic scale with all-new civilisations, unique units and technologies, and

campaigns based on infamous conquerors such as Attila the Hun, El Cid and Montezuma. The trial version includes one standard multiplayer game (King of the Hill on a Yucatan Map), one single player campaign scenario (Montezuma One), and two civilisations (Mayan and Aztec).



Blair Witch



BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 1: RUSTIN PARR

Category: Adventure

Developer: Gathering Of Developers

Need: P233, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: N/A

The player assumes the role of Elspeth "Doc" Holliday, scientific investigator for Spookhouse, a shadowy agency dedicated to protecting the world from supernatural evil. The year is 1941. An insane hermit named Rustin Parr has confessed to murdering seven children in the quiet Maryland town of Burkittsville. His claim is that an "old woman ghost" drove him to his heinous crimes. Parr's rantings coincide with age-old local legends: tales of the cursed woods surrounding the town and a murderous, vengeful entity that has haunted Burkittsville for two hundred years, an abomination known locally as "The Blair Witch." Spookhouse has taken keen interest in the subject. Doc travels to Burkittsville to investigate...

Keys

F1: Display list of controls

F2: Save game

F3: Restore game

F5: Toggle sound

F6: Quick save

F9: Quick load

F11: Brighten Screen (Gamma Settings)

F12: Darken Screen (Gamma Settings)

ESC: Pause

DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR

Category: Action

Developer: Novalogic

Need: P266, 64MB RAM, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX

Delta Force: Land Warrior is the follow-up to the popular special forces action games, Delta Force and Delta Force 2. A cohesive, character-driven storyline raises the stakes over the previous games, introducing a squad of five veteran Delta Force soldiers. Players will step into the boots of each squad

member as the team carries out special operations ranging from hostage rescue to sabotage to direct assaults on terrorist compounds.

Controls

Mouse Controls: Look up/down, turn left/right

Left Mouse Button: Fire Weapon

Right Mouse Button: Toggle Scope

Middle Mouse Button: (if available)

Lie Prone

VIEWS

F3: 1st Person POV

F4: Show Gun Toggle (1st person only)

F5: 3rd Person, follow camera

F6: 3rd Person, non-tracking

F7: Drop Cam (locks camera in a set location)

MOVEMENT

Arrow Keys : Move

forward/backward, sidestep

left/right

P: Look Up

..: Look Down

L: Look Left

;;: Look Right

Shift: Walk (hold down while using arrow keys)

Space bar: Jump

Delete: Stand

End: Crouch

Page Down: Lie Prone

DEUS EX UPDATED DEMO + EXTRA MISSION

Category: Action/RPG

Developer: Eidos Interactive

Need: P2-300, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct 3D

Multiplayer: N/A

The future is here, and the world has become a dangerous place. Terrorists operate openly, killing thousands; drug, disease, and pollution kill even more. The world's economies are close to collapse and the gap between the insanely wealthy and the desperately poor has grown to the size of the Grand Canyon. Worst of all, an ages old

KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS

Category: Firstperson Shooter

Developer: Gathering Of Developers

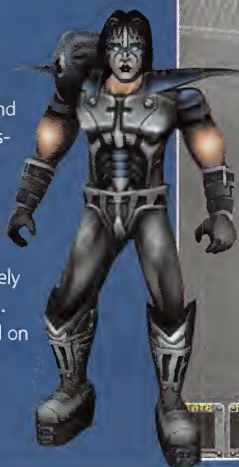
Need: P266, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card

3D: Direct3D

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX

■ Kiss: Psycho Circus is a demonic world of mystery and horror, where the player must battle the hideous freaks-of-nature spawned by the Nightmare Child. The game is an intense firstperson shooter that is based on the rich world created by Todd McFarlane in his best-selling comic books.

The player begins as a mere mortal and progressively acquires the powers of The Elder, a supernatural being. The Elder is embodied by four alter egos that are based on the Kiss characters. The alter egos are the Demon, the Starbearer, the Beast King, and the Celestial. Together, they can prevent the unraveling of the universe.



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Deus Ex

conspiracy bent on world domination has decided that the time is right to emerge from the shadows and take control. No one believes they exist. No one but you.

This is an updated demo with all patches applied. We've even been so kind enough to include an extra level. Enjoy!

Controls

MOVING

UP, W: Move Forward
DOWN, S: Move Backward
LEFT, A: Strafe (sidestep) Left
RIGHT, D: Strafe (sidestep) Right
Z: Turn Left
C: Turn Right
Q: Lean Left
E: Lean Right
Spacebar, Ins: Jump
X, Num .: Crouch
M: Mouse Look
Shift (hold): Walk/Run
Caps Lock Toggle: Walk/Run

USING ITEMS/WEAPONS

Left Mouse Button, Enter:
Use Object in Hand
Right Mouse Button:
Use Object in World
Tab, Center Mouse Button:
Drop/Throw Item
Backspace: Put Item Away
Mousewheel Up:
Select Next Belt Item
Mousewheel down:
Select Previous Belt Item
0-9: Select Belt Items



F1: Open Inventory Screen
;; Reload Weapon
[: Toggle Scope
]: Toggle Laser Sight
' : Change Ammo

SANITY: AIKEN'S ARTIFACT

Category: Action/Adventure
Developer: Fox Interactive
Need: P2-300, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
3D: Direct 3D
Multiplayer: N/A
Years from now, citizens around the world begin to display remarkable psychic abilities. These citizens, called Psionics, are tormented souls able to generate and control energy emissions using only their minds—often with catastrophic and deadly results. Succumbing to the lure of the power they possess, the Psionics will stop at nothing to achieve control of the universe.



Your mission is to stop the Psionics from taking over the world without losing Cain's sanity. On your quest to bring the rogue Psionics to justice, you will infiltrate secret drug labs, explore demon-infested catacombs, and even participate in a sick and twisted game show.

Keys

PLAYER MOVEMENT

Right mouse button:
move towards cursor
Left mouse button: select/action
Left Arrow: move left



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

Right Arrow: move right
Up Arrow: move up
Down Arrow: move down

OTHER KEYS

1-0: select talent in slot 1-10
C: toggle camera mode
W: zoom out
S: zoom in
A: rotate camera right
D: rotate camera left
G: gun
E: restore camera defaults
Z: mouse swivel camera
Q: move camera behind player

THANDOR

Category: Realtime Strategy
Developer: JoWood
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA
3D: Direct 3D
Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX
Many years ago the Golraths, an aggressive and merciless people living not far from our galaxy, started to conquer and enslave other galaxies and to exterminate the population. So the other nations formed an alliance against these aggressive Golraths. This independent military organization was named "Alliance of Avars" or just "Ares", after its place of foundation. Thandor puts you in command of Ares' troops on a mission to save the galaxy from the Golraths' tyrannical rule.

Keys

All movements via the mouse

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Category: Sports
Developer: Activision
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
3D: Direct3D
Multiplayer: N/A

All of the tricks that made Tony Hawk's Pro Skater so much fun to play are

back. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 takes it to the next level with hundreds of additional tricks, including nose/tailsides, nose/bluntsides, varial flip, a multitude of new grabs, expanded inverts, lip tricks, nollies, manuals, and more realistic switch skating. And when they fall, players will see and hear the enhanced bails, nutters, knee slides, pole wraps, board breaks and wall splats.

Keys

IN GAME

Slide: Numpad 8, V
Jump/Olly: Numpad 2, SPACEBAR
Grab: Numpad 6, B
Kick: Numpad 4, C

Up Arrow: Up
Down Arrow: Down
Left Arrow: Left
Right Arrow: Right

Spin Left Continuous: Numpad 7
Spin Right Continuous: Numpad 1
Spin Left 180: Numpad 9
Spin Right 180: Numpad 3



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2



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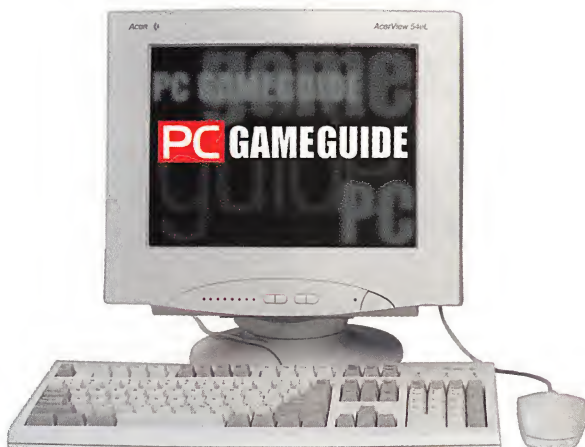
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want, with **PC GAMEGUIDE** at your side.



DISC 2



FAKK2

HEAVY METAL: FAKK2

Category: Firstperson Shooter
Developer: Gathering Of Developers
Need: P2-233, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
3D: OpenGL
Multiplayer: N/A

Based on the Heavy Metal universe, FAKK2 puts you in the shoes of Julie, a steel-eyed huntress and expert warrior. FAKK fights with a single purpose - she will not rest until she's freed her sister from the ruthless, power-hungry monster who abducted her when he ravaged their majestic planet and stole its greatest secret. More than 20 powerful weapons comprise your arsenal, including both hand to hand

and long-range weapons. Utilising the power of the Quake III engine, FAKK2 features state-of-the-art visuals.

Controls

Use the mouse to move the camera

Crouch - c
 Turn Left - q
 Turn Right - e
 Strafe Left - a
 Strafe Right - d

Run/Walk - Shift

Use - x
 Holster Weapon - r
 Previous Weapon - f
 Inventory - i

Sword - 1
 Defense - 2

Guns - 3
 Explosives - 4

Big Guns - 5
 Health - 6

Camera Look - TAB
 Quick Save - F6
 Quick Load - F9

RUGBY 2001

Category: Sports
Developer: EA Sports
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA
3D: Direct 3D
Multiplayer: N/A

Rugby 2001 features 20 real international teams and over 600 real players with statistics taken from Rugby World Cup '99. Sculpting techniques were used for the creation of realistic likenesses of actual players including build, height, and player numbers. An all-new 3D game engine allows smoother, more realistic player animations and dynamic stadium and player lighting. Players even get dirty when they fall over, yet only the area that comes in contact with the ground will be affected. Use any camera angle you wish to view all the intense rugby action. Note: You can play one half between England and Australia.

Controls

Run/up/down/left/right - Arrow Keys
 Pass left/right - Z / X
 Punt/drop Kick: A
 Up and Under: S
 Grubber Kick: D
 Soccer Kick (ball is on the ground): D
 Tackle/Contest tackle: Z
 Change controlled player: X
 Hand-off / Sprint: V
 Touch-down / Dive on ball: C
 Try: Any Key

STUPID INVADERS

Category: Adventure
Developer: UbiSoft
Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
3D: Direct 3D
Multiplayer: N/A

After accidentally crash landing on Earth,

Etno and his alien pals unwind from their latest calamity. With a moment break, the five hapless aliens find themselves on the run from an evil scientist, Dr. Sakarine, who collects aliens as a hobby. However, this evil professor and his hired henchman, Bolok, have plans for Etno and his friends, which include a comprehensive study of alien physiology. The aliens will have to do their best to find crazy solutions and escape the clutches and scalpels of the madman.

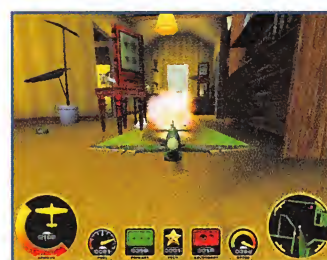
Keys

All controls are via the mouse

AIRFIX DOGFIGHT

Category: Flight Sim
Developer: Visual Park
Need: P2-300, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
3D: Direct3D, Glide
Multiplayer: N/A

Enter the daydreaming fantasies of a marauding kid, home alone in a empty house. Building his own Airfix models, equipping them with firecrackers and other homemade weapons, he takes the role of a World War II fighter pilot. Now our hero has finally gotten a chance to prove his skills. The parents have gone astray and left him alone with his opposing forces. It's time for a miniature yet devastating battle between the real powers of this



corner of imagination.

Controls

D: Increase thrust
 C: Decrease thrust
 Left: Bank left
 Right: Bank right
 Up: Pitch down
 Down: Pitch up
 Space: Fire machineguns
 Z: Fire secondary weapon
 Keypad 0: Next weapon

STAR TREK DS9: THE FALLEN

Category: Action/Adventure
Developer: Simon & Schuster Interactive
Need: P233, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
3D: Direct3D, OpenGL

Multiplayer: TCP/IP, IPX

Star Trek Deep Space Nine: The Fallen is a thirdperson action/adventure powered by an enhanced version of the Unreal Tournament engine. Playing as Sisko, Kira, or Worf, you must battle your way through a series of increasingly perilous missions. You must attempt to protect the station, and the entire Alpha Quadrant, from a host of rival factions that are determined to retrieve and exploit the destructive potential of the lost Red Orbs.

Controls

Keyboard

Ctrl: Primary Weapon Attack
 Alt: Alternate Weapon Attack
 W: Move Forward
 S: Move Back
 A: Strafe Left
 D: Strafe Right
 Shift: Walk Slowly
 Space: Jump/Swim Up
 Cor NumPad Period: Crouch/Swim Down
 Delete: Look Up
 Page Down: Look Down

PATCHES

Diablo II
 Heavy Metal FAKK2
 Icewind Dale
 Quake III Point Release 117
 Soldier Of Fortune
 Unreal Tournament

MODS

This months special addons include
 Dark Reign Mods
 Diablo 2 Character editors
 Half-life Counterstrike 7.0
 Motorcross Madness Terrain editor
 Quake 3 Arena tweaks
 Quake 3 Arena Fight Club
 Quake 3 Urban Terror
 Star Trek Deep Space Nine Mp3s
 Unreal Arena beta

EMULATORS

Over 100 emulators covering Amiga, Arcade, Atari, Commodore64, Colecovision, Mac, N64, Neogeo, Playstation, Sega Saturn, Sega Megadrive, Sega Master System and the Snes.



FLASHBACK WITH...

Charles Cecil

(Revolution Software)



Charles Cecil is the founder of England's Revolution Software. His previous games include Lure of the Temptress, Beneath A Steel Sky and the Broken Sword series. He is currently working on the action/adventure In Cold Blood.

The game that I played the most was Warcraft 2. I absolutely loved it. First of all, it was exciting - I know it's quite cliched, but they just did it really well. What I loved about it, - much more than Command & Conquer - was that not only did the units talk to you, but you could look at them and it was so obvious what they were going to do. Like if you had a big, fat guy, you knew he would just crunch everyone he came across, but that he'd be slow. The gameplay was incredibly intuitive, much more so than C&C in my opinion.

I obviously play adventures as well, and certainly three or four years ago I enjoyed a good range of adventures. Of course Broken Sword would be number one, followed by Broken Sword 2, Beneath A Steel Sky and Lure of the Temptress... [laughs]...

But I think that a close fifth would come Day of the Tentacle, which was just such fun. I loved the idea of sending hamsters through time, baked in ice, through a toilet. At that time, LucasArts had such bright guys working there. Monkey Island was very, very good as well. I'm looking forward to the next Monkey Island game, but I have to say that Curse of Monkey Island wasn't nearly as exciting as the first two.



I never really got into Sierra's Quest games. With King's Quest, in particular, the whole idea of King Graham of Davenry is just so ludicrous because Davenry is just on the way to Luton airport and Graham is such an un-kingly name. The games took themselves desperately seriously, but were completely unconvincing.

But then Sierra has now done Half-Life. I don't want to write games that are firstperson shooters, but Half-Life really got me into that genre. It was just so immersive and it was nice to play a game that genuinely made you jump.

Metal Gear Solid is a classic game. Maybe the characters take themselves much too seriously and, as such, the story never really gripped me. I wanted to continue playing because I enjoyed the

gameplay, not because I was convinced by the story. There was too much talking and the characters were pretty one-dimensional.

I'll give a place to Alone in the Dark, too. It really was a seminal product. And the Japanese are lying when they say they didn't copy it [with Resident Evil], because you know they did. It's very Japanese, though, to take a game that exists and then make it a lot better.

Impossible Mission on the Commodore 64 was just extraordinary. It was the first game to overlay hi-res monochrome sprites onto lo-res coloured sprites. It was a fantastic effect. We were developing Spectrum games at the time, and I just looked at this and realised we'd been left behind.

THE ARCHIVE

FOUR YEARS AS AUSTRALIA'S AUTHORITY ON PC GAMING

PCPP#2 JUNE 1996

The cover image of a Hindu Goddess on our second issue was obscure enough to warrant an explanation on the contents page inside. Her name was Kali and her multiple arms apparently symbolised the potential for multiplayer gaming over the internet. Kali pioneered online gaming and, despite its lack of user-friendliness, we owe much to its early success. Quite what we were thinking when we featured Screamer and Terminal Velocity as worthwhile Kali games, though, isn't entirely clear. Complementing this look at online gaming was a comprehensive strategy guide to Command & Conquer, focusing completely on its multiplayer mode. Surely it's time we stopped talking of online games as the future - it's been with us for over four years now.



REVIEWS

Terra Nova (91%), Zork Nemesis (86%), Earth Siege 2 (85%)

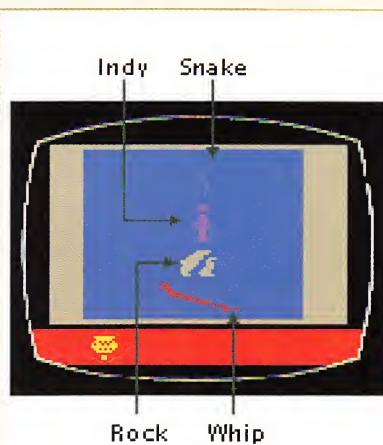
QUOTES

"I'm thinking wow - choose a) if you want an erection, choose b) if you don't... the possibilities are endless."
- Mark Hamill gets all excited about interactive erotic movies.

MY FIRST GAME

WITH MURRAY PHILBRICK

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK ATARI 2600



Remarkably involved for an Atari title (despite its being a mere five or six screens long), this license had the usual graphics that needed annotations in the manual to point out what each mess of pixels was supposed to be. It was confusingly obtuse enough that I never managed to finish it, but it still holds most of my earliest gaming memories.

Contributions to MY 1ST GAME are welcome.

Send 100 words and a pic of the game (or game box) to: letters@pcpowerplay.com.au with "MY 1ST GAME" in the subject line.

WIN!

TONY HAWK PRO SKATER 2 AND WIZARDS & WARRIORS

The good people at Activision have deemed the PC PowerPlay readership to be worthy of two of their upcoming games. As such, they've handed us two copies of the skateboarding spectacular that is Tony Hawk 2,

as well as two copies of the sword and sorcery sensation that is Wizards & Warriors. If you would like to win either or both of these promising looking games, then just complete the following assignments:

WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope.

Do not forget to put the competition name on the front of the envelope.

All entries close October 31st.

SEND TO:

PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St.
Redfern NSW 2016

PCPP 52 WINNERS

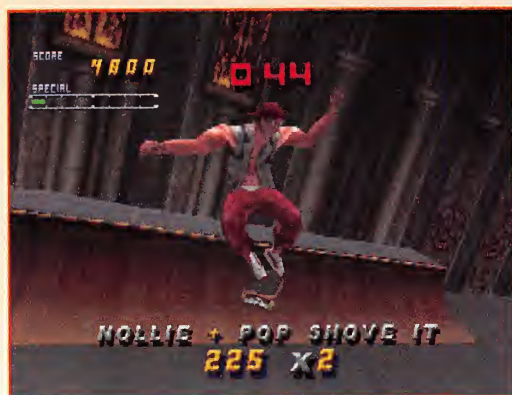
Voodoo Magic
D. Sinn, Red Cliffs VIC

I Want UO

(Only five winners)

S. James, Clarencetown NSW
W. Brown, Kensington Park SA
R. Sinn, Red Cliffs VIC
C. Mullins, Willunga SA
L. Grieve, Brahma Lodge SA

Best of Firstperson Action
N. Rummery, Crows Nest NSW



To win Tony Hawk 2, we want you to design a skateboard. Simply draw, craft or scribble your entry on the back of an envelope. The winner will be the reader with the most creative, artistic and original design. Mark your entry Tony Hawk Comp.



To win Wizards & Warriors, we want you to illustrate a fight between the eponymous wizard and warrior. Once more, your entry must appear on the back of an envelope. The winner will be the reader with either the best artwork or the one who makes us laugh the most. Mark your entry Wizards & Warriors Comp.

What is the TRUE CALLING of TONY the Reviewing Monkey?

Jim Says: Tony? Tony who? Never heard of him.
Translation: Secret Agent

David Says: Tony has remarkable personal hygiene for a primate.
Translation: Bouncer

The Major Says: That animal is a disgrace to the Australian people. He couldn't defend a banana from his own MOUTH.
Translation: Taste Tester

Brett Says: He has almost no respect -- for himself or anyone else.
Translation: T.V. "journalist" (Stop Mr. Stupid!)
There you have it! END

NEXT MONTH

PCPowerPlay

Ten years ago it started a revolution



Are you ready to Return to
Castle Wolfenstein?



PCPP#55 - On sale November 8, 2000

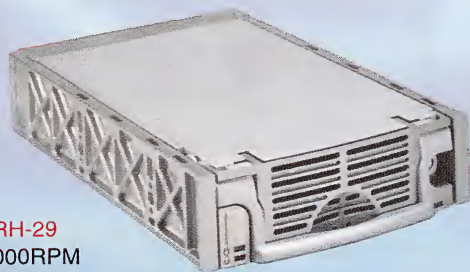


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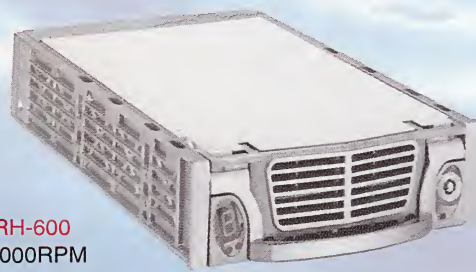
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